MEGAVORE

The Journal of Popular Fiction

11

HLAVATY ON HEINLEIN

INTERVIEW WITH JONATHAN LATIMER

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THE ENGINEER AND ME

by Arthur D. Hlavaty

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0. Intercourse and Relationships

We begin with a deceptively simple question: What is a story? Of course, we can define the word "story" in the two ways words are defined--verbally ("a story is a work of fiction") and ostensively (by pointing to suitable examples). But what does it mean, for instance, to say that two stories are "really" the same story?

For instance, imagine that a story is published in a magazine, and there is a typographical error, which is corrected when the story is reprinted in a book. Presumably, the two stories are "really" the same story.

But are they? When Norman Mailer's novel WHY ARE WE IN VIETNAM? was first published, it concluded with the words, "Vietnam, hot damn." Mailer was incensed. The publishers, he said, had blundered and ruined his book. Subsequent editions have concluded, as Mailer intended them to, with the words, "Vietnam, hot dam."

In fact, I know of another book where I found a change amounting to less than a single letter significant. In that book, or the hardcover edition of it, one comes to a scene where the protagonist is about to find out What It All Means. This occurs on the bottom line of the right-hand page. One turns the page, and the next page, and all the rest of the pages are blank. In the paperback edition, the novel clearly ends there, and (to me, anyway) something is lost.

Then, too, there is the fact that stories, like everything else, exist in a context. A story is written by a particular person, in a particular culture, at a particular time. There are critics (those who practice what I believe is still known as "the new criticism") who insist that this fact must be utterly ignored. Others maintain that the more knowledge one has about the context of a story, the better one can discuss it. Each approach has problems. The new criticism seems like a sort of willed ignorance. And yet the other approach leads to paradoxes too, as pointed out by Jorge Luis Borges in his "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote," where he interprets a quote from Cervantes and a quote from his fictional author Menard as greatly different in meaning, even though they consist of the same words. (A similar paradox that I've mentioned here before is a story about the relationships of the sexes, called "The Women Men Don't See." It was published under the name of "James Tiptree, Jr." It is now known that the author is a woman named Alice Sheldon. In what sense is Mr. Tiptree's "The Women Men Don't See" the same story as Ms. Sheldon's "The Women Men Don't See"?)

Tibetan Buddhist psychology includes the concept of sparsa--the idea that any act of perception is actually a ternary relationship among perceived object, perceiving self, and perceptual medium. Before I'd seen this term, I suggested (in DR 1), a similar view of literature by which a "story" may be defined as an act of verbal intercourse between a writer and a reader, in which the printed words on the page are the medium.

This approach has several advantages. It is neither strictly objective nor strictly subjective; that is, it does not reduce reading to an activity like monitoring scientific devices, but leaves room for treating the act of perception as a personal and even creative one. At the same time, it avoids absolute subjectivity, since disagreements over a given story can at least be discussed by reference to the text. (If someone were to maintain that there is no character in ILLUMINATUS! named Hagbard Celine, the answer would be not "That's your opinion," but "That's wrong.")

It means, too, that if we are going to judge books, the standards by which we do so are not absolute. We can, if we wish, judge in terms of traditional literary standards such as style, characterization, & plot. On the other hand, others may choose to decide on the basis of Excitement, Social Relevance, or Exquisitely Described Blow Jobs, and their judgments can be as valid within their system. Thus a reviewer's recommendations are valid for a particular reader only to the extent that reviewer & reader share the same criteria.

We can use this model to look at the approaches to literary criticism in general, and choose whichever one seems the most comfortable on an individual basis. The traditional historical approach to the study of English literature is that one begins with BEOWULF and reads the Major Works up through, let us say, T. S. Eliot, seeing how each fits into the historical pattern established by its predecessors. The advantage to this is that it gives a much more varied & much richer view of the works read. The disadvantage is that you have to read a lot of shit. You may decide for yourself which consideration is more important for you.

The New Criticism represents a certain purity of approach. The mind is disciplined to ignore such matters as historical background, biographical information on the author, etc. I find such discipline to be beyond my powers, but I do not condemn those who can do it.

I prefer to read with some sense of history, and to relate one story by a given author to previously-read stories by the same author. If a story is an act of intercourse, then the reading of many stories by the same author can constitute a relationship, sometimes a highly meaningful one.

In the first issue of DR, I remarked that I did not care for certain approaches to story telling, including oblique and evasive presentation, fragmented story telling, etc. I carefully indicated that I was describing my own preferences in literary intercourse, rather than setting down laws of literary merit. Nonetheless, some felt that I was slighting favored authors of theirs, and indicated that there might be inconsistencies in my approach, especially as I spoke of liking particular works which seem to fall under the headings I was condemning in general.

Considering those replies, I came to realize that my reactions to a given story are in part conditioned by my previous relationship with the author in question. So when John Brunner opened STAND ON ZANZIBAR with a burst of seemingly random information about characters unknown to me, I decided to grant the author of THE WHOLE MAN and THE LONG RESULT a presumption of competence, reading a while longer with as open a mind as possible before condemning the book as the sort of gibberish it at first appeared to me. I was rewarded for this approach by one of the more enjoyable literary experiences of my life. Other writers, however, have not convinced me that they have earned the trust I gave Brunner, and thus I

will abandon their books with a feeling of auctorial persecution when perhaps a further reading would have been justified.

Of course, this business of having a relationship with an author is a bit tricky. Authors are, in a sense, paid liars, and they learn certain forms of guile. One should beware the common vulgar error of assuming that if the narrator of a story is a child molester, a mass murderer, or a socialist, the author must be one, too.

At the same time, I would avoid the equal & opposite error of assuming that since fiction is all made up anyway, we can never know anything about authors from their work. There are, of course, writers like Harlan Ellison who go to great lengths to remind the reader (via prefaces, etc.) that the story being read is not some self-begotten artifact, but the work of an actual human being who lives & breathes & suffers.

It seems reasonable to me to think of a sort of hypothesized author that I create from the actual author's writings. I do not presume to know even so open a writer as Harlan Ellison, even though I have read every word of his I could get my hands on.

And yet, I do have a relationship with "Harlan Ellison"--the name on a story that tells me that it is likely (though by no means certain) that i will enjoy & appreciate the story in question. My expectations (and thus my reading of the story) are conditioned by the relationship.

With that philosophical background out of the way, we may turn to my major topic--the writings of the Engineer, Robert A. Heinlein, and to my relationship to him, or more precisely, to the auctorial personality I perceive in his writings. I call this personality "Mr. Heinlein" because there is a certain formality to his approach and because one of the things he has been to me is teacher, and I was brought up to address my teachers in such a formal manner.

1. THE ENGINEER AS WRITER

The fact that Robert A. Heinlein was an engineer before he was a writer is frequently brought up in discussions of his work. To many people, the idea of the same person being an engineer and a writer at the same time seemed like a contradiction in terms.

I am tempted to feel that way for one idiosyncratic reason. The college I attended (Swarthmore) attempted to attract engineers & made it easier for them to enter. This led to the Affirmative Action Syndrome, in which most of us were there because we were qualified, but the engineers were there because they belonged to the appropriate minority, and it showed. Thus, both artistic types & pure scientists (and I, as a student of philosophy & mathematics, was on the borderline) felt justified in regarding engineers as inferior, a conclusion which I have since learned does not hold in the Real World.

But there are more general reasons for finding the idea of a writer-engineer paradoxical. There is the whole Two Cultures bit--the idea that there is some sort of conflict between the arts & the sciences. Some think it reasonable that ability in one would conflict with ability in the other. To me, this makes about as much as sense as assuming that one could sing or dance, but not both. (Of course, it might be fairer if one could do one but not both, but as everyone knows, or should know, the Creator is not fair.)

Furthermore, at least in theory, engineers are professionals, and writers are artists, and these are two different personality types. There is something to that. Professionals, in the ideal, are like the rest of us, only more competent in their chosen field. Artists are Different. We can go back to Socrates and his image of poets as Holy Lunatics, writing in fits of creative madness, with no idea what they are doing, and afterwards no more understanding of what they have done than any other reader. An exaggeration, to be sure, but there is something to it.

According to the currently popular hemispheric model of the human brain, professionals work largely with the steady, rational left hemisphere, applying the Thinking function. Artists, on the other hand, work largely with the right brain, that dark mysterious portion wherein resides the puzzling Intuition function. The right brain is by its nature untrustworthy & unpredictable, subject to flashes of genius, but resistant to being told to behave predictably.

Another oversimplification, of course. Both hemispheres work in everyone, except a few pathological cases, and even there it is apparently possible for one side to take over some of the functions of the other. Thus, it would seem perfectly possible to be part engineer and part artist.

But I would take the argument one step further, and say that there is room in the literary world for those who are primarily professionals, rather than artists.

A work of literature can be seen as an attempt to do two things at once--to communicate with the reader, and to express the writer's Self. These two functions are not precisely opposed to each other, but there is a certain tension between them. There is the highly personal self-expressive work of writers like Joyce & Pound, which is hard to comprehend, and there is the formulaic writing in genres such as SOL and Gothics, which shows little self-expression at all. Of course, a good deal of writing (and this is the kind I like best) does

some of both, but probably it does less of either than work that concentrates on one. Thus we may speak of the professional writer as one who is primarily concerned with communication, and learns certain skills & techniques to further that end.

Which brings us to Heinlein and his contribution to science fiction. In 1938, a would-be scientist named John W. Campbell became the editor of ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION. He ran the magazine in a way not unlike a laboratory. He proposed ideas which his professional writers "experimented upon" by writing stories. This cooperative method worked in many cases. Isaac Asimov was one of the writers Campbell developed by this method. Asimov's account of the origin of the famous Three Laws of Robotics makes it clear that the laws were discovered by the two of them; neither would have done it alone.

Heinlein was perhaps the best of these scientist-writers, and certainly the most influential. I would say that his influence was not so much a matter of any of the stories that he created, but rather in the way he designed the tools which science fiction writers have used ever since.

Science fiction faces one specific technical problem: It is set in backgrounds which are different in kind from those in which the reader lives. To deal with this requires a different approach, and it was Heinlein who had much to do with developing this approach.

Before him, characters tended to go on at great length about matters which should have been obvious to both of them. Windy expository lumps filled page after page as readers waited more or less patiently for the characters to do something interesting. It was Heinlein who did most to develop subtler ways of indicating the differences between the world in which the story was set and contemporary consensus reality.

I do not wish to oversimplify. There were writers before Heinlein who recognized the problem and did things about it. And it would certainly be overly optimistic to say that he solved the problem for once & for all.

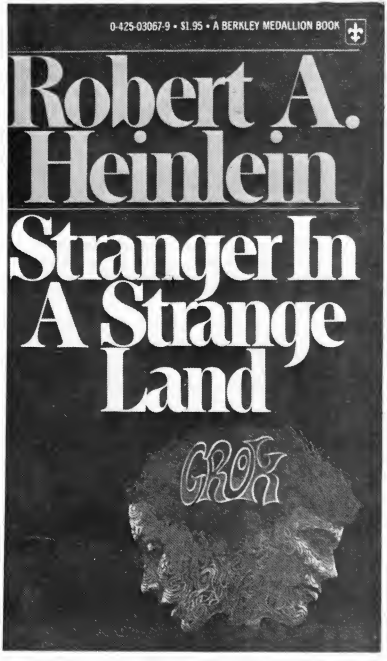
Another contribution Heinlein made was the Future History--a consistent pattern for a future into which a number of novels & stories could be fitted. This too can be seen as a technical solution to a technical problem: The fact that the background may be the hardest part of the book, and it's used up. (This was especially serious as long as it was assumed that a science fiction book had to be less than 200 pages.)

Finally, Heinlein served (and continues to) as science fiction's recruiting agent. It is generally conceded that he wrote some of the best juvenile books the field has ever produced.

This too can be seen as a function of technical abilities. I would suggest that the best way to write juvenile science fiction is not (definitely not) to say, "What can I write for the sweet innocent little dears?" but to produce a stripped-down minimalistic form of writing in which plot & character complexities are minimized. To do this is by no means easy, but it's a matter of professional skill, rather than artistic inspiration. (One difference between adult & juvenile fiction that may spring to mind is that the latter is required to have little or no obscenity or explicit copulation. Doing this without appearing wishy-washy is likewise a technical matter. In any event, allegedly adult science fiction, at the time Heinlein was writing his juveniles--the 50s--rarely had much of these

ingredients.)

I was not, in fact, recruited by Heinlein in my teenage years, as so many science fiction readers were. I began to read him when I was 23, and familiar with writers like Pohl & Asimov. And then I read STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND.



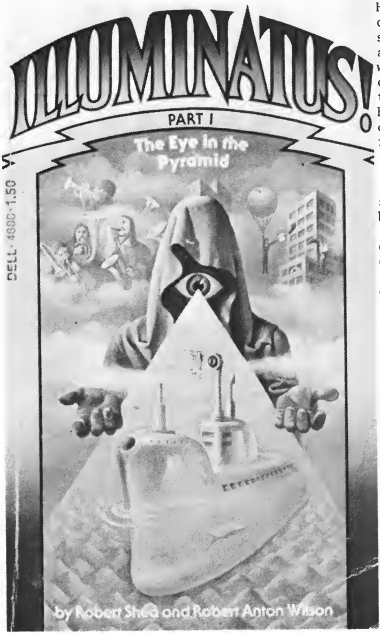
2. THE ENGINEER STEPS OUT

Let me backtrack a moment, and reintroduce the shadowy "Mr. Heinlein"--the figure I project from my reading of the works written by an actual human being named Robert A. Heinlein and somewhat resembling the real Heinlein, as a representational portrait resembles its subject. I see him in the year 1959, with no more worlds to conquer, or so it might seem. He has written the short stories & novels since collected as THE PAST THROUGH TOMORROW. He has written a bold metaphysical speculation called BEYOND THIS HORIZON and a minor masterpiece called DOUBLE STAR, the one book I would recommend to those who wish to see the best of Heinlein in a small space. He has written a group of highly successful juveniles, such as STAR BEAST and RED PLANET. For him to remain within the confines of his craft would be to condemn himself to repetition of what he has already done. For him to become an artist after his years as a professional would be the sort of drastic and incredible character change that is rightly condemned whenever it shows up in fiction. What to do? I imagine him deciding to move from the science fiction he has mastered (in his own terms) to the overlapping field of didactic fiction.

As the professional writer is considered secondary to the artistic writer, so we may say that didactic fiction is secondary to more esthetic types. C. S. Lewis, in his brilliant EXPERIMENT IN CRITICISM, suggests that the highest form of relationship between writer and reader is one in which the reader "receives" the work of art--accepts it as a thing unto itself--rather than "using" it.

I confess. I use fiction. If a work of fiction seems to me to contain interesting ideas or useful insights into the human condition, I use them, and I will admit that I find such

values more important than the standard literary ones. There are works of fiction (CATCH-22 and ILLUMINATUS! spring to mind) which have in a very real sense made me what I am today. I cannot imagine a person who had not read those books and yet was still me.



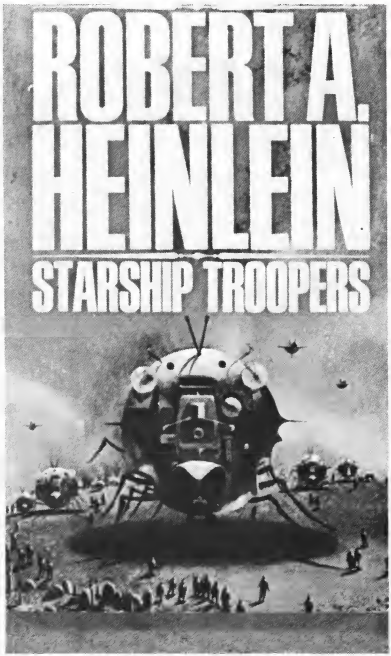
A more public argument. Eric Berne's GAMES PEOPLE PLAY has enough fascinating, well-rounded characters in it for a dozen novels, yet it is a work of nonfiction. Florence King has written three delightful books--SOUTHERN LADIES AND GENTLEMEN; W.A.S.P., WHERE IS THY STING; and HE--which do not purport to be works of "social science," are generally shelved in the nonfiction sections, and are full of fascinating characters who may be disguised real people, or composites, or constructs. Do I have to decide which category I must put her books in before I am permitted to decide whether I may use them or must receive them?

Perhaps I grow cynical and smart-assed. In all seriousness, I believe that receiving a work of literature can be a magnificent & ennobling experience. All I wish to question is the apparent assumption that those who use literature are dummies or slobs, or at least in some sense second-rate.

Didactic fiction, then, is impure literature, but what it is alloyed with need not be valueless. To be sure, didactic fiction may have been a source of even more bad writing than porn. If it were literally impossible to write the stuff, all the world's vanity presses would probably fold tomorrow. Even the stuff that gets published without being subsidized by its author tends to be quite bad. Often the book does not meet even the most charitable literary criteria, and often the ideas presented are banal, vicious, or both. And yet if one can put up with limited literary merit and story values in a book that expands consciousness with a sense of wonder, why not make the same concession for something that raises consciousness through its discussion of ideas?

Consider George Bernard Shaw, whose plays are often debates, but brilliantly written & argued ones. Consider BRAVE NEW WORLD, ISLAND, and 1984, with their differing looks at What Might Be. Or consider THE HARRAD EXPERIMENT, by Robert H. Rimmer. Its flaws are many and obvious: The dialog could not be spoken, the plot is crude, there is an impossible niceness to virtually all the characters, and when Rimmer speaks through a female narrator, the result is every bit as convincing a woman as Milton Berle in a dress. But many people, including me, have been changed by the sexual ideas presented in that book. I read it 13 years ago, and read such far better (literarily) novels as DUNE and THE COMEDIANS at the same time. I remember much of HARRAD, and no longer remember the others.

In any event, at the cusp I spoke of earlier, Heinlein wrote a book called STARSHIP TROOPERS. That creaking noise you just heard was me bending over backwards in an attempt to be fair to the book. I believe it is fair to say that the book is militaristic. It glorifies the military, particularly the foot soldier. I believe it is neither fair nor accurate to say that is totalitarian, fascistic, bloodthirsty, or latently homesexual, though each of these has been said by at least one intelligent critic. I am too unsympathetic with miliratism to discuss the book properly. I agree with Alexei Panshin's description of the book as the written equivalent of a recruiting poster. It is, shall we say, didactic fiction, and perhaps effective with those who lean in the way it points.



3. I MEET THE ENGINEER

In 1966, I didn't know all this. I'd read a few of Heinlein's earlier books, and enjoyed them, and so when a family friend (who, I later realized, resembled Jubal Harshaw more than anyone I had met before or have met since) recommended that I read STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND, I took his advice.

And was changed. The book has been misunderstood even more than STARSHIP TROOPERS. What I give you is my interpretation of the two most relevant (to me) parts of the book.

1. Thou Art God. When STRANGER came out, its religious doctrines were misunderstood even by such knowledgeable critics as James Blish, who assumed that they were some sort of weirdness that the author had made up all by himself. I had the good fortune to realize shortly after reading the book that its Martian blasphemy was in fact Hindu orthodoxy. When I say that Heinlein explained Eastern doctrine as an engineer would, I am paying him a compliment. Another aspect of the hemispheric brain model is that verbal abilities are localized in the left hemisphere, while feelings of oneness with the Universe appear in the right half. This makes it hard to discuss such feelings in intelligible terms, and leads to the sort of "yeah, you know, man, like, everything is, like, you know, everything, man, and like it's all groovy" that those of us who lived through the hippie era are all too familiar with. But like Alan Watts, whom I also discovered around that time, Heinlein literally had his head together and found ways to discuss his right-brain feelings with left-brain skills.

2. Let's Grok Again. And then there was the sex. The writings of Albert Ellis had already convinced me there were people who were not made for heterosexual monogamy & were not necessarily sickies & perverts, but it was STRANGER that convinced me that I might be one of them. Oh, at first I figured that I might not quite be ready for the sort of Nest Heinlein described until such time as I developed telepathy & other Powers, but the feeling was there, and other books (such as the aforementioned HARRAD EXPERIMENT) would move me further.

One thing that did not bother me about STRANGER was the fact that it was written by the author of STARSHIP TROOPERS, even though the supposed inconsistencies between the two books bothered a lot of people.

The idea that the same author could write a sex-freedom manifesto and a defense of militarism bothered quite a few people. To some, it indicated an acutely split personality; to others, reaffirmation of the dogma that you can't tell the writer by the book, but everyone took it as strange.

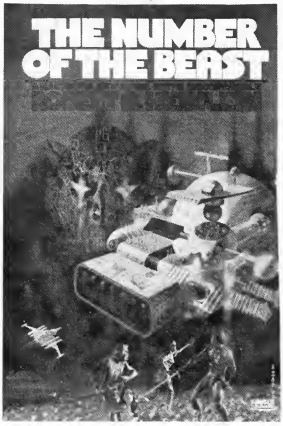
I didn't. I took it as further evidence that one of the basic images I had grown up with was wrong. I'd been taught that political & social views could be put on a scale from Left to Right, and that people were consistent in such matters, so that someone who was 2 units to the Left (as I was brought up to be) favored civil rights, a mixed economy, legalization of porn as long as it had literary merit, and so on, and that anybody who like some of these but opposed others was inconsistent, or simply wrong.

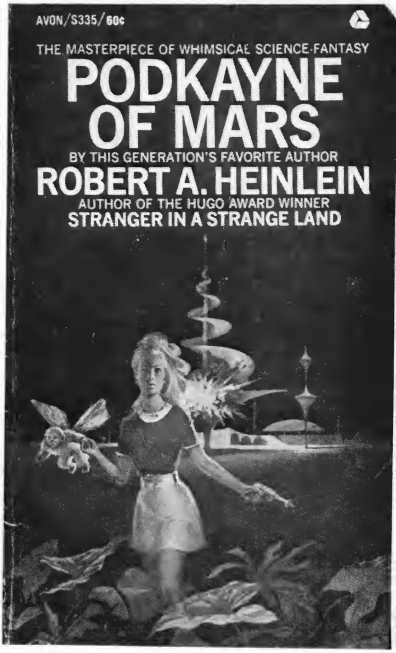
I think the first time that bothered me was when I heard of the Leo Frank lynching. Frank was lynched for being a not-too-plausible subject in a rather gross murder, and mainly for being Jewish. The leader of the lynch mob was a Populist. Now that didn't make sense, according to what I

was taught, because Populism was Left and anti-Semitism was Right. Didn't he realize he was being inconsistent?

Inconsistency was everywhere. I was reading the PLAYBOY Philosophy and watching Hugh Hefner defend sex freedom (Left) and free enterprise (Right). THE REALIST seemed Left (sometimes excessively so), but they published a fellow named Wilson who appeared to be neither Left, Right, nor Center, and insisted that there were other people before him (named Tucker & Spooner & Stirner) who likewise did not fit the mold, but you wouldn't find out about them in your Official History books.

Anyway, with all this, it did not bother me that this Mr. Heinlein could write a militarist book and a sex-freedom book. In 1967, he wrote a book called THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS (which you might want to call a libertarian book), and a lot of stuff began to make sense to me, but that is one digression too many in what is already a long & loosely structured ~~harangue~~ essay.





4. THE TIRED ENGINEER

Meanwhile, back in the science-fiction community, there was consternation. For one thing, even among those who read the literature of the future, there are some who are comforted by repetition of what they have loved in the past. Heinlein was clearly doing something different. And of course, even among those who were not hidebound traditionalists, there was the feeling that Heinlein's new emphasis on didactics was a mistake.

As they say in the world of music, Heinlein had become a crossover performer, and a lot of science fiction people were wondering why. Two other science-fiction writers--Ray Bradbury and Kurt Vonnegut--had crossed over, but they had done so by denying their roots and being picked up by the Literary Establishment. Heinlein hadn't done this. He was attracting a different following.

For this militarist had become a guru to the hippies. His blend of group sex and Eastern religion was very close to the ethos of the Haight-Ashbury, so much so that he could be forgiven a few negative references to marijuana and such.

Some science-fiction people took offense at this alliance, and when it was revealed that Charles Manson and his gang had claimed to be following the precepts of STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND, there were those who said, "I told you so."

It is of course at least as unfair to blame the Manson murders on STRANGER as to blame the Bible for the millions of murders done in its name. Manson was obviously reinterpreting the book to suti himself. To be sure, the good guys in the book did discorporate a number of bad guys. (Nowhere near as many as in STARSHIP TROOPERS.) but they did so by mental powers. There is a belief in occult circles that advanced mental powers come only through a training program which assures that the trainee is ready to use them, thus assuring that no one will kill out of ignorance or simpleminded greed. STRANGER represented this tradition. The message of the book in this regard is that the Enlightened Ones are licensed to kill only when they have reached an advanced stage of consciousness such that they can do so by sheer mental abilities. If you need to use knives, you're not ready.

In any event, at this time of discontent with his writing, Heinlein published what many of us consider his worst book. I WILL FEAR NO EVIL is long, talky, actionless, and repetitive. Worse, yet, it seems to show a loss of creative control. Johann Sebastian Bach Smith is supposed to be the sort of lovable old curmudgeon Jubal Harshaw was. Instead, he comes across as the sort of cranky old fart who is forever disinheriting his grandchildren for yawning the twenty-third time he tells them how he made his first million. There is a point about seven-eighths of the way through the book where something happens that makes no sense to me. I accept the idea that Johann & Eunice can share the consciousness of Eunice's body after Johann's brain is transplanted into it. But then, another character dies and joins them. I've never gotten an explanation of this because almost no one has read that far.

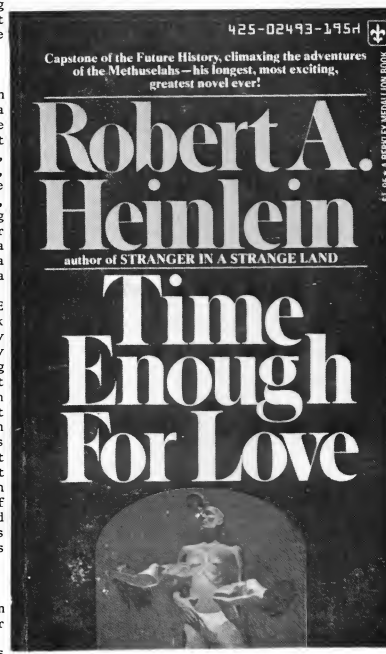
I WILL FEAR NO EVIL was almost universally despised within the science-fiction community, but if Heinlein cared one way or the other about this reaction, he gave no sign of it. Three years later, he published TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE.

TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE is a mixed book that drew a mixed reaction. It

is immense, and at least as loosely constructed as this essay--a fictional frame into which are jammed several short stories, a few vignettes, 2 selections of aphorisms, and a great deal of dialog. There is a lack of story values in the main narrative; a crucial escape by the good guys takes place entirely offstage and is hardly described. (I imagine Mr. Heinlein deciding that he needn't do that sort of thing again because he's already proved that he can do it, and getting away with it--in the sense of getting the book published without it, if not escaping critical brickbats--because of his reputation.)

And then there is sex. Heinlein has always tried not to be a male-chauvinist pig, even before others noticed such problems, and that is a point in his favor. He has not, however, succeeded. Twenty years ago, he wrote PODKAYNE OF MARS, in which he presented a teenage girl as competent, intelligent, & efficient, something that feminists would be calling for years later. And yet, he gave her a prose style cute enough to gag a maggot because he could not imagine a teenage girl talking any other way. There are similar problems in TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE. The sex in the book is casual and permissive; bisexuality is utterly accepted. (Those who say that Heinlein suffers from hardening of the categories should note that this is an advance from the squeamish dismissal of gay sex in STRANGER.) But the sex herein is more unusual than that. It has been described as masturbatory, incestuous, or just plain solipsistic. One might say that the Heinlein protagonist, faced with the two traditional obscene insults of Western society--go fuck yourself and fuck your mother--treats them as reasonable suggestions. This too has bothered many readers.

I believe that the book has been treated unfairly, but there are fair negative things one can say about it. I consider it verbose, though not as much so as I WILL FEAR NO EVIL. The continuing endearments the characters exchange at times make my skin crawl. I find Lazarus Long, like other Heinlein protagonists, self-deceiving. He claims to be tough and unfeeling, yet will adopt anything small and even slightly cuddly that crosses his line of vision. He claims to be horny enough so that the crack of dawn isn't safe from him, yet has to be nagged and cajoled into bed by each new woman.



5. TO THE UNCERTAIN FUTURE

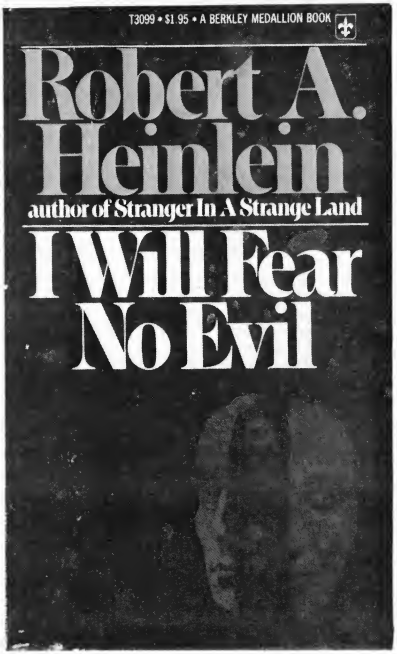
There are those who say that Heinlein, having written a number of Juveniles, is now doing Seniles. There are those--like Spider Robinson--who consider him a near-perfect writer who's never been better. Both views strike me as oversimplified. The continuing-decay approach fails since I consider TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE much better than I WILL FEAR NO EVIL. And yet, there are, for me, problems and defects which continue, and some which continually worsen.

There will be two new books by Heinlein out soon--a novel entitled THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST and a compendium called EXPANDING UNIVERSE, consisting of stories, essays, and much new material.

THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST has been excerpted in OMNI. I began to read it, but foreboding seized me immediately when I noticed that it began with the hero and heroine having a light-hearted discussion of the latter's tits. It is generally agreed by all but the staunchest Heinlein worshippers that light-hearted erotic/romantic banter has always been one of the Master's weak points. He hasn't changed a bit. After a page or so, my teeth were standing on edge; my crap detector was buzzing, ringing, lighting up, and setting off smoke bombs; and my suspension-of-disbelief mechanism was loudly announcing that it would never function again if I did not disconnect it at once.

Thus the irritating but fascinating Mr. Heinlein. He glorifies war and children, but has never been involved in the former or had the latter. He can be windy, cranky, and opinionated. His hand has lost at least some of its skill.

And yet there is the other side. He presents ideas well. His dialog, at its best, crackles with wit, and only a few of the best writers--like Lawrence Sanders & George V. Higgins--surpass him. He can be unpredictable. Mr. Heinlein, I eagerly await these two meetings and hope there will be many more.



JONATHAN W. LATIMER: AN INTERVIEW by Jim McCahery
Copyright © 1980 James R. McCahery

(Born in Chicago on October 23, 1906, Jonathan Wyatt Latimer presently resides in La Jolla, California with his second wife Jo Ann. He is the father of three children, Ellen Jane, Jonathan, and Nicholas all of whom are married and have children of their own. A graduate of Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois (1929) and a member of Phi Beta Kappa, he became a Hollywood scriptwriter after serving with the U.S. Navy "mostly as executive officer on a destroyer doing convoy duty in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean from 1943 to the middle of 1945." An early disciple of the hard-boiled school, Jonathan Latimer is the creator of private detective William Crane who appeared in his first five novels, if one excludes the non-series novel *The Search for My Great-Uncle's Head* (1937) written under his Peter Coffin pseudonym. Besides his novels and film work he is perhaps best known for his numerous scripts for television's *Perry Mason*. For the purposes of this interview JM = the Interviewer and JL = Jonathan Latimer.)

JM: When did you first feel writing was to be your career?

JL: As far back as I can remember. I read everything I could get my hands on from seven or eight on; wildly diverse writers ranging from whoever wrote Tom Swift and The Rover Boys to Dumas, Dickens, Victor Hugo, etc. and I dreamed of being one of them as other kids dreamed of being baseball or football stars.

JM: Had you written anything before Murder in the Madhouse*?*

JL: Just for high school and college publications.

JM: What type newspaper work did you do in Chicago in the 30's?

JL: In the Fall of 1929, after a summer spent bicycling around France and Germany, I went to work in Chicago as a newspaper reporter; first with Hearst's *Herald-Examiner*, the newspaper of *The Front Page*, play and two movies, and then with the city's largest paper, the *Chicago Tribune*. For the first two years I was assigned largly to criminal matters: gangland slayings, kidnappings, more or less routine homicides, race riots, bank embezzlements and such. I knew Al Capone, George "Bugs" Moran and assorted other gangsters, as well as various whorehouse madams, pimps, dope peddlers and con men. Later I became a rewrite man, taking stories from reporters by telephone and putting them into proper shape. One Sunday, when I was the only rewrite man in the *Herald-xaminer* office, I established some sort of record by writing about ten thousand words in six hours about the machine-gun slaying of Chicago's second most prominent union labor boss on his way home from church and the escape of John Dillinger, at the time the country's most notorious outlaw, from the Crown Point, Indiana, jail. In passing I might say that I believe a newspaper to be one of the best training schools for would-be writers, requiring clarity, brevity and self-discipline. After five years reporting, and having sold *Murder in the Madhouse* to Doubleday, Doran, I quit my job and moved to Key West, Florida. I stayed there three years, then crossed the country to La Jolla, California, where I've lived ever since.

JM: Did you have any regular writing routine or discipline which you set for yourself?

JL: With books I used to write mornings until I had a thousand words or so. Then I'd return to rewriting or blocking out the next day's work. About six hours a day in all.

JM: Did you do much rewriting on your novels?

JL: I did a lot of rewriting: not so much plot changes as sharpening scenes and dialogue and condensing descriptions.

JM: I guess it's only natural to ask how much of Jonathan Latimer went into the creation of his two protagonists, newspaperman Sam Clay (Sinners and Shrouds) *and scriptwriter Richard Blake* (Black Is the Fashion for Dying).

JL: Not much. They were free sould, funny and gay, while I'm pretty sober-sided.

JM: Was your most famous character, Bill Crane, modeled on anyone at all?

JL: Yes, a writer friend who didn't like the idea so I won't mention his name.

JM: Since you were a newspaperman yourself, it's amusing to see Crane's poor opinion of reporters. A deliberate bit of tongue-in-cheek at this atage?

JL: I have the highest regard for reporters, especially the wildly resourceful variety working in the golden days of competitive newspapers (1920-1940) when a "scoop" meant extra circulation, and sometimes a bonus.

JM: Did you plan terminating the Crane series at the time you were writing the last novel, Red Gardenias, *or was it a later decision? Any special reason?*

JL: I don't know exactly why I abandoned Crane. Perhaps because I felt I was repeating myself.

JM: Did you foresee that Ann Fortune would seriously change the character of the highly independent Bill Crane by becoming his wife?

JL: As I recall it, Crane wasn't married to Ann Fortune. They were merely pretending to be married as a cover for their investigations.

JM: What, if any, were (are) your impressions of the three William Crane films that featured Preston Foster? Did you do any of the scripting or were you consulted at all?

JL: The three movies based on my books were purchased while I was living in Key West. I'd had no experience writing screenplays and the matter of my converting the books didn't come up. I thought all three films were quite good considering they were made as cheaply as possible.

JM: What brought you to write The Search for My Great-Uncle's Head *at the time you were in the middle of the Crane series? This book is quite unlike anything else you've written before or since, belonging more to the Golden Age of mystery/detective fiction?*

JL: *Great-Uncle's Head* was written because I didn't want to turn out too many Cranes too quickly. I didn't particularly like the book while I was writing it, and still don't.

JM: Doubleday, as I recall, built up the fact that Peter Coffin was actually a well-known author already in their stable of writers. Was the inclusion of Colonel Black in this book a humorous attempt to see if readers could identify the real writer behind the mask?

JL: I put Black in hoping he'd turn out to be the protagonist of another series. He didn't.

JM: I've always been intrigued by the circumstances surrounding the publication of The Fifth Grave *which didn't appear here until its publication in* Mystery Book Magazine *(August, 1946), and not in book form until 1950 when it was issued by Popular Library. It was originally published, however, by Methuen in England in 1941 under the title* Solomon's Vineyard.

JL: Doubleday turned down *The Fifth Grave* (actually *Solomon's Vineyard*) for fear of a libel suit from the House of David, a religious colony in Benton Harbor, Michigan, operating almost exactly as the colony in the book. My agent sold it in England and *Mystery Book Magazine* approached me after the war, apparently having read the English version. I can't remember how Popular Library became interested.

JM: Speaking of publishers, your later two books were not issued by your original publisher either. Any special stories behind the changes?

JL: Doubleday broke its option on me by refusing *Solomon's Vineyard* and when *Sinners and Shrouds* was finished my agent (William Morris, Ltd.) selected Simon and Schuster. And when the lady mystery editor there, Lee somebody, went to Random House I went with her (*Black Is the Fashion for Dying*).

JM: Am I correct in assuming that The Mink-Lined Coffin *was your original title for* Black Is the Fashion for Dying?

JL: Yes. I despised the title *Black Is the Fashion for Dying* which was given to the book by the publisher. My title, *The Mink-Lined Coffin*, was used only in England.

JM: Did you write at all for any of the pulps or slick magazines? Any short stories or novelets?

JL: Three of the Crane books were serials in *Collier's*.

JM: Do you recall what then seemingly controversial material was deleted from the Dell Great Mystery Library release of Headed for a Hearse *in 1957?*

JL: If I remember correctly, the N.A.A.C.P. objected to Crane thinking of blacks as niggers in two places: in an orchestra and in a shooting sequence. I suggested they find Crane and straighten *him* out, but I guess Dell couldn't find him.

JM: Did you prefer scriptwriting to your work as a novelist?

JL: I preferred that lovely scriptwriting money.

JM: How did you become a scriptwriter when you were already so busy with your novels?

JL: A Columbia Pictures producer named Joseph Sistrom found me in nearby La Jolla. He said he liked my work and wanted me to do an original screen treatment for *The Lone Wolf* series. The studio liked the treatment and decided to gamble on me for the screenplay. Incidentally, Joe became my closest Hollywood friend. He did, among other films, *Wake Island* and *Double Indemnity.* He's been dead nearly 15 years now.

JM: I guess most readers would like to know if you have a favorite among your novels and film scripts.

JL: *Solomon's Vineyard* and *The Big Clock* are my favorites.

JM: Did you do any directing at all yourself?

JL: No.

JM: Were you acquainted with Hammett or Chandler? Other authors?

JL: I got to know Chandler quite well, especially while he was living in La Jolla. He was a sharp, crusty man with a heart of ice.

JM: How about other scriptwriters (Helen Nielsen, Leigh Brackett, Steve Fisher, Frank Gruber, etc.)?

JL: I had only a "hello" relationship with the other mystery writers who worked for the movies. I never cared much about any sort of writers and I only joined the Screen Writers Guild because it was a union you pretty nearly had to belong to if you wanted to work for the studios.

JM: The Big Clock *is one of my own personal favorite films (and books) of all time. Any interesting stories about the filming of this one from your point of view?*

JL: A director named Leslie Fenton was brought in by Paramount to direct *The Big Clock.* He read the script, said it stank and bowed out. John Farrow then directed it into a large success, not changing the script at all. Fenton later directed another picture of mine, *The Redhead and the Cowboy,* and allowed that maybe he'd made a mistake about *The Big Clock.*

JM: Your least-known work is probably Dark Memory *about a museum expedition in African pygmy country for two gorillas and a missing husband. Did you have the films in mind when you wrote this one since you wrote it early in your career as a scriptwriter (1940)?*

JL: I can't remember what I had in mind when I wrote *Dark Memory.* Possibly it was because I wanted a change of pace after six mysteries.

JM: Besides your work on the Perry Mason *series for which you did some 40 to 50 teleplays, what else did you do in the TV field?*

JL: I wrote about 10 teleplays for a series called *Markham* starring Ray Milland, 5 for a series called *Hong Kong.* Also perhaps 20 others for various shows including two very expensive scientific films, *The Strange Case of the Cosmic Rays* and *The Unchained Goddess* for Frank Capra.

JM: Did you work at all with Gail Patrick during the Mason series?

JL: Gail Patrick was the producer-part owner of the Perry Mason series, but I talked with her only a few times.

JM: Did you find any great difference scripting for television as compared to theater films?

JL: The difference between TV and Screen writing is the time element. TV wants it now, or even yesterday, while with a movie script there's generally room for characterization and some originality in plot and scenes.

JM: Did you do any radio work at all?

JL: No.

JM: Do you personally feel that your writing was in any way influenced by any of your own favorite authors?

JL: I'm sure I was influenced by Hemingway and James Cain, both of whom I admired.

JM: Do you read much in the mystery/detective field today? Who are your favorite authors?

JL: I read very little mystery/detection these days. Only recent book I've really liked was Ross Thomas' *Chinaman's Chance* which I thought was great fun.

JM: Any chance of your many fans looking forward to any new fiction from you?

JL: Nothing more from me unless starvation looms.

JM: When did you retire and what are your present interests?

JL: I retired about seven years ago. My present interest is staying alive. Hobbies: tennis, ocean swimming, reading and girl watching.

JM: What personal advise would you give to serious would-be writers?

JL: I never advise would-be writers except young ladies who are blond and stacked.

+ +

JONATHAN W. LATIMER: BIBLIOGRAPHY

Murder in the Madhouse
- Crime Club, Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1934; Hurst, 1935
- Sun Dial Press, 1940 in *The Latimer Big Three*
- Triangle Books, 1940
- Popular Library #4 (date not available)
- Jonathan Press #69 (abridged; date not available)

Headed for a Hearse
- Crime Club, Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1935; Methuen, 1936
- Sun Dial Press, 1938
- Sun Dial Press, 1938
- Mercury Mystery #38 (date not available)
- Dell Great Mystery Library #6 (D-196, abridged, 1957)
- Jonathan Press #84 (abridged; date not available)

JONATHAN W. LATIMER: BIBLIOGRAPHY (continued)

The Lady in the Morgue
- Crime Club, Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1936; Methuen, 1937
- Sun Dial Press, 1937
- Sun Dial Press, 1940 in *The Latimer Big Three*
- Pocket Books #246, 1944
- Crime Club, Doubleday and Co., 1953 (25th Anniversary Crime Club Classic)

The Search for My Great-Uncle's Head (as by Peter Coffin)
- Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1937

The Dead Don't Care
- Crime Club, Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1938; Methuen, 1938
- Sun Dial Press, 1939
- Sun Dial Press, 1940 in *The Latimer Big Three*
- Popular Library #16 (date not available)
- Mercury Mystery #182 (date not available)
- McFadden, 1964

Red Gardenias
- Crime Club, Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1939; Methuen, 1939
- Sun Dial Press, 1940
- Mercury Mystery #55 (no date available)
- Jonathan Press #77 as *Some Dames Are Deadly*

Dark Memory (non-mystery)
- Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1940
- Sun Dial Press, 1942

Solomon's Vineyard
- Methuen, 1941
- *Mystery Book Magazine*, August, 1946 as *The Fifth Grave*
- Popular Library, 1950 as *The Fifth Grave* (#301)

Sinners and Shrouds
- Simon and Schuster, 1955
- Methuen, 1956

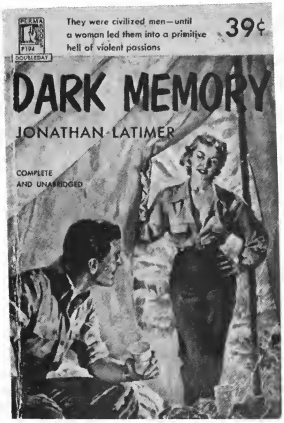
Black Is the Fashion for Dying
- Random House, 1959
- Methuen, 1960 as *The Mink-Lined Coffin*
- Pocket Books #6087, 1961

JONATHAN W. LATIMER: FILMOGRAPHY (The following is a list of his 20 major screen plays with director in parentheses. Studios have been omitted merely because I have been unable to verify all of them.)

1939 *The Lone Wolf's Spy Hunt* (Peter Godfrey)
1940 *Phantom Raiders* (Jacques Tourneur)
1941 *Topper Returns* (Roy Del Ruth)
1941 *Night in New Orleans* (William Clemens)
1942 *The Glass Key* (Stuart Heisler)
1946 *They Won't Believe Me* (Irving Pichel)
1946 *Nocturne* (Edwin L. Marin)
1947 *The Big Clock* (John Farrow)

JONATHAN W. LATIMER: FILMOGRAPHY (continued)

1948 *The Sealed Verdict* (Lewis Allen)
1948 *Beyond Glory* (John Farrow)
1948 *Night Has a Thousand Eyes* (John Farrow)
1949 *Alias Nick Beal* (John Farrow)
1950 *Copper Canyon* (John Farrow)
1951 *The Redhead and the Cowboy* (Leslie Fenton)
1951 *Submarine Command* (John Farrow)
1953 *Botany Bay* (John Farrow)
1953 *Plunder Under the Sun* (John Farrow)
1956 *Back From Eternity* (John Farrow)
1957 *The Unholy Wife* (John Farrow)
1958 *The Whole Truth* (John Guillermin)



PUBLISHERS' CODES AND COLLECTING CONTEMPORARY EDITIONS

by Keith L. Justice

During the process of assembling my Silverberg collection I realized that several years ago many publishers stopped using the simple declarative method of identifying printings. A few paperback publishers--such as Dell--still list the number of printings a book has been through and even give month and year dates for each printing. Such publishers are a collector's best friend, and make the identification and collection of copies from each printing much easier. Publishers such as Del Rey/Ballantine and Avon are less easy to get along with; they give information only for the first and last printings. If there were four printings of a book, one can find out the month and year of printing only for the first and fourth printings (assuming the examination copy is from the most recent printing), but there would still be copies and/or publishing information to find for the second and third printings. A copy of each would have to be secured because neither printing would carry information on the other.

There is no real problem, however, with identifying printings which are as clearly (if not conveniently) marked as paperbacks from Del Rey and Avon. The real problems arise with publishers who have adopted numerical codes. I have encountered the problem in connection with mail-order purchasing of books because in some instances the dealers do not know how to read the publishers' codes. Most recently I bought an advertised tenth printing paperback copy of THE WORLD INSIDE, knowing even as I ordered it that the Signet paper edition had probably not yet gone through four printings. But for the sake of completeness and thoroughness it seemed necessary to be absolutely certain. When the book arrived it was a second printing copy, and the dealer simply did not know how to read the code.

The Signet code is really very simple. On the same page as the copyright notices the Signet book will carry the month and year date of the first printing and beneath this information will be a numerical code. If the code reads

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

then the number of the printing corresponds to the first number of the code, or 2 (second printing), not the last number. Signet adds numbers on the right as digits are removed on the left to indicate additional printings. Thus the third printing of A TIME OF CHANGES carries the code

3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

The new numerical codes are not as desirable as the old fashioned listing method because the codes generally give only an identification of the printing; codes do not usually provide month and year date information. Information about previous printings (except the first) is usually lacking. Though the codes are not desirable from a bibliographer's standpoint, the codes are rapidly replacing standard notations. Harper and Row has been using numerical codes for five years or longer, and additional publishers are switching to codes every year.

If a collector of contemporary books lacks a clear understanding of the codes, assembling a collection of copies from each printing of a book would be difficult. If one were laboring under the delusion that the second and third printing Signet codes actually designated the tenth and eleventh printings, it would be extremely puzzling to find that it was impossible to locate copies from the second through the ninth printings. A complicating circumstance is the fact that Signet (and other publishers) is by no means consistent in editorial policy. The change of a book cover

between printings can be an excellent point of recognition for indicating which printing produced a particular book. THOSE WHO WATCH, for instance, underwent at least one cover change from the first to the third printing, but DOWNWARD TO THE EARTH and A TIME OF CHANGES have both gone through three Signet printings with no change of cover (except for minor changes in price and publisher ID number).

The Elsevier/Nelson code is similar to the Signet code but is reversed. The first edition of DAWN OF TIME carries the code

First Edition
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

on the information page with the copyright data. In this case, the last number on the right is the printing designator; if DOT goes into a second printing, the "First Edition" notice will be dropped and the code will read

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

Pocket Books uses a code identical to the Nelson code.

The Harper and Row code is similar to the Nelson code except that Harper's adds year-date codes. First edition copies of LORD VALENTINE'S CASTLE and NEW DIMENSIONS TEN carry the code

80 81 82 83 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

The first number on the left is the year-date indicator and the last number on the right is the printing ID. If CASTLE goes into an additional printing this year the year-date codes will remain unchanged but the "1" will be dropped from the code on the far right. Unlike other publishers, such as Signet, Harper does not add numbers to the printing ID between the printing designator series and the year-date codes as numbers are removed from the right to identify the printing. Thus the fourth printing of THE MIRROR OF INFINITY, published by Harper as a Perennial paperback in 1978 as a fourth printing, is identified by the code

78 79 80 81 10 9 8 7 6 5 4

Obviously the need for a knowledge of printing codes is specialized. If one is interested only in first printings, L. W. Currey's SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY AUTHORS can provide all the help with identification that one may need. But if one is collecting copies from all printings, either for bibliographical purposes or simply to see the changes in editions through multiple-printings sequence of a book by a favorite author, knowing the codes can save time and money in dealing with mail-order booksellers. Most of the codes are not difficult, and in fact are so similar that a working knowledge of the codes can be obtained very quickly.

David Badke

Grant Thiessen

THE AVON AND DAW PROBLEM

by Richard Bilyeu

(Extracted from the forthcoming book, THE TANELORN ARCHIVES, to be published later this year by Pandora's Books Ltd. See advertising section for ordering information.)

Many a book collector, and in at least one known case, an author, has spent much time scouring bookshelves, in a futile search for a DAW or Avon second printing. I know that I did until a book scouting trip to Canada finally gave me the answer. There are no second American printings, per se, of either Avon or DAW books. At least not if one goes by either company's printing histories. In the case of Avon Books, let's take THE CORNELIUS CHRONICLES for an example. One will find USA printings that say "First" or "Third" but never a "Second". The problem is simply bad bookkeeping. When Avon releases a book in the States, they usually do so in Canada as well (provided that some British company does not have the rights to distribute that title in Canada). A simultaneous (or nearly so) printing. But when the time comes for a second US printing, somehow the Canadian printing is counted as a "Second". Therefore the second US printing will state itself to be a "Third". It is nonetheless the true American second printing.

DAW's can be more complicated in this area as they tend to have smaller print runs and thus go through more printings, so I will use THE LAND LEVIATHAN as an example. When a DAW book is first released its printing history will look like this:

FIRST PRINTING, JANUARY 1976
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Well, since DAW publishes a simultaneous printing in Canada, just like Avon, somehow they do the same bookkeeping trick. So, of course, the second US printing comes out reading:

FIRST PRINTING, JANUARY 1976
3 4 5 6 7 8 9

It is nevertheless the true US second. To make matters worse though, the US second sold out faster than the Canadian first. So, you guessed it, when DAW got their presses rolling for the third printing, it came out reading:

FIRST PRINTING, JANUARY 1976
4 5 6 7 8 9

So when the Canadian first finally went out of print they of course went into their own second printing, except someone up there could count, and their's read:

FIRST PRINTING, JANUARY 1976
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Someone back home in the States took notice of this so when the time for printing the fourth printing rolled around it looked like this:

FIRST PRINTING, JANUARY 1976
6 7 8 9

Why this happens, exactly, I'm not certain. Avon, after several phone calls, admitted that they did indeed count their Canadian printings with their American, although they weren't sure just why themselves. DAW never was able to confirm anything about their procedures. I suspect that since the covers for both the American and Canadian printings are printed in the US, that that is the probable origin of the procedure. I hope this solves at least one mystery for some completist collector out there.

By far the most impressive bibliography of a single author that I have seen in this field is THE WORKS OF M. P. SHIEL by A. Reynolds Morse. Published by J. D.S. Books, P.O. Box 67 MCS in three paperbound, and are primarily available only as review copies and contributor copies. The copy I have is perfect-bound, 8-1/2 by 11 inches. A few copies of these are available if anyone wants them as curiosities (J.D.S. Books terminology) for $35.00 each. 200 copies are produced in 22-ring loose leaf binders, designed to accept update inserts, at $40.00 each. Of the 900 copy print run, the remaining 600 are cloth bound, at $45.00 each. All copies are numbered and signed by the compiler. Vol. 1 (fiction) was in the same format, same print run, and is still available in ring ($30.00) and cloth ($35.00).

Because of the immensity of this work, the bibliography has been split into two volumes. (Prices above apply to EACH volume.) Volume II contains the first 414 pages (!) of the bibliography. It includes a checklist of the various editons of the novels and short stories of Shiel, following which is an incredibly detailed description of each printing of every edition of a work of M. P. Shiel's; including books, short stories (in books, periodicals, newspapers, etc.), miscellaneous works, known manuscripts, corrected texts, proofs, typescripts (published and unpublished), and bibliography about the author. Also included is a section on M. P. Shiel and Arthur Machen.

Volume III includes biographical notes, Shiel's personal library, the address of Edward Shanks at Shiel's funeral, an essay on Shiel's literary worth, a long section on Shiel's kingdom (he was King of the uninhabitable island of Redonda in the West Indies), and a bibliography of Louis Tracy (with whom M. P. Shiel collaborated, especially as "Gordon Holmes"). Scattered throughout the text of both volumes are reproductions of book jackets, manuscripts, photos, maps, and much, much more.

Admittedly expensive, these volumes are worth every penny. As works of scholarship, I am tremendously impressed with them, and as a contribution to knowledge they are invaluable. There is also much here to be used by future bibliographers as an example of an excellent way to do a bibliography.

Elliot, Dr. Jeffrey m. SCIENCE FICTION VOICES #2. (Borgo Press; $2.95)

This is a slim volume of interviews, yet it is a bargain, for it is rare to encounter sf interviews with as much perception and depth as these. I was especially interested in the interviews with A. E. van Vogt and Larry Niven, with both of whom I have had the pleasure of private conversation. I was thoroughlly enchanted with both of these interviews, and impressed by the skill with which Dr. Elliot drew out the interviewees into startling candour and revelation. Also included in this volume are interviews with Ray Bradbury, Poul Anderson, and Robert Silverberg; interviews which I have no doubt I will savour with equal enjoyment in future.

THE DENVER SF FANZINE MONITOR is available from THE SECOND FOUNDATION, 521 E. 14th Avenue #18, Denver, CO 80203. It is a thin, Gestetner produced fanzine with one important merit. Serialized in twelve parts in this fanzine is a book called PORNOGRAPHY: THE MENACE THAT NEVER WAS. It is the insightful, ever-engrossing story of the editor, who started a bookstore many years ago, drifted into selling smut, and ended up in Leavenworth. What he has to say is not always nice, but it's worth reading. $2.00 should get you a

sample issue (or maybe two, I'm really not sure).

ECHOES FROM THE PULPS #3 is available from Joseph Lewandowski, 26502 Calle San Francisco, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675. This volume is devoted to Captain Satan, and is a work of art. It features color front and back covers (combination photography and Xerography, with additional touches using print lab techniques and eqiupment. It is not mass-produced. The first printing is only 40 copies. It includes a long "interview" with the fictional Jeremy Watkyns from the pages of Captain Satan, and a Captain Satan bibliography. The editor does not really give a selling price, but has indicated that it costs him about $3.00 to print and mail, so you could probably use that as a guide. Highly recommended to anyone into the hero pulps.

REBEL REPORT! is a weekly newszine of sf, fantasy & horror. Subscriptions are $6.50 for 13 issues. Longer subscriptions are available at multiples of that price and subscription length. It is a thin, primarily movie oriented fanzine, with no pretensions to all-encompassing coverage. It is available from Suite 1, 5005 Riviera Court, Fort Wayne, IN 46825.

LINES OF OCCURRENCE and THE DIAGONAL RELATIONSHIP are both fanzines put out by Arthur D. Hlavaty. This man has THINGS TO SAY. I have included an article from a recent issue of THE DIAGONAL RELATIONSHIP in this issue of MEGAVORE to show you what he can do. $1.00 should get you a sample of what he can do, and you can take it from there. Available from him at 250 Colígni Ave., New Rochelle, NY 10801. Highly recommended.

GOTHIC is a magazine devoted to horror. Typeset, offset, it is a quality production. This issue (vol. 2 #1) includes some fiction, some criticism, and a number of reviews. Fans of horror fiction should take note of this magazine while it is still available. Vol. 1 is available at $6.00, and a subscription to this semi-annual magazine is available for $6.00 from Gothic Press, 4998 Perkins Road, Baton Rouge, LA 70808.

COLLECTING PAPERBACKS? is an important magazine for the collector of paperbacks. Vol. 2 #3 (the most recent issue) includes articles on The Shadow, Doc Savage, Philip Jose Farmer, James Blish, Robert McCauley, and Jack Kerouac--all as they relate to paperbacks. There are a number of reproductions of covers, as well as ads. Back issues and single copies are $3.00 each. A 6 issue subscription is $12.00 from 934 SE 15th, Portland, OR 97214.

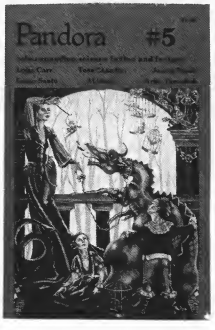
EERIE COUNTRY #3 is published by WEIRDBOOK PRESS, Box 35, Amherst Branch, Buffalo, N.Y. 14226. Single copy price is $2.00 and subscriptions are 4 for $6.00. Included in this issue of this magazine of horror fiction are a number of stories and poems, including a number of relative

newcomers, as well as Jessica Salmonson, and Joseph Payne Brennan (verse). W. Paul Ganley, the editor, always does a first rate job on his magazines, and this one is no exception.

WANTED is an oversize paperback from Bantam Books which I am am sure will be anything but wanted. It is 22 posters of alien criminals wanted by the Intergalactic Security Bureau. Again, we have a case where the editors of this work confuse fantasy in the artistic sense with fantasy in the science fiction sense. The artwork is pitiful, consisting of supposedly fantastic artwork by artists whose imaginations are thoroughly earthbound. It seems as if all the aliens we are going to meet are anthropomorphic, and will visibly be related to Terran animals or other life-forms. There is so little imagination here that I expect Bantam will get large returns from the booksellers and then decide that sf is on the way out, so they will cutback their sf line. With the large number of high-quality artbooks which have been produced to serve as an example, it is difficult to understand what they were thinking of when they produced this book. I suppose I should mention that it cost $8.95.

BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES OF THE YEAR, Ninth Annual Collection, edited by Gardner Dozois (Dutton, August 18, 1980, $11.95). Included in this collection are Hugo Award winning stories "Sandkings" by George R. R. Martin and "The Way of Cross and Dragon" also by George R. R. Martin. "Sandkings" also won a Nebula, and "giANTS" by Edward Bryant, also a Nebula winner, is also included. Not a bad performance for Mr. Dozois. Also included are Joe Haldeman (Bloodsisters), Jack Dann (Camps), Dean Ing (Down and Out on Ellfive Prime), Gregory Benford (Redeemer), James P. Girard (In Trophonius's Cave), Suzy McKee Charnas (The Ancient Mind at Work), Michael Bishop (Vernalfest Morning), and Hilbert Schenck (The Battle of the Abaco Reefs).

There are those who say that the true form of science fiction is the short story. For those that believe that, they will love MICROCOSMIC TALES: 100 WOndrous Science Fiction Short-Short Stories, edited by Isaac Asimov, Martin Harry Greenberg, and Joseph D. Olander. (Taplinger, November 25, 1980, $12.95). If you think I'm going to list all of the contents, you're sadly mistaken. Some of the notables included however are Fredric Brown (of course!, and 4 times, too), Harlan Ellison, Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, A. E. van Vogt, Larry Niven, and the list goes on, and on, and on. Recommended.



PANDORA #5 (what a nice name for a magazine) is an excellently produced magazine of fantasy and science fiction. It is magazines like this that serve as the real training ground for new writers these days, although I did recognize the name of Jayge Carr as an already-successful new writer. Color cover, offset, $2.50 (four issue subscriptions for $6.00) from...There's no address! (All I can find is Sproing Inc., Denver, CO 80206, and if you think that's going to get a letter delivered these days, you have more faith than I do in the Postal Farce).

HIATUS IN PARADISE

by Dana Martin Batory

"'As for our racial origins, there are representatives of a great many nations among us, though it is perhaps natural that Tibetans and Chinese make up the majority.'

'Are there any English?'

'Several.'"[1]

Thus was the essence of the first discussion between Miss Roberta Brinklow of the Eastern Mission and half-lama Chang, in the monastery beneath Karakal, the mountain of the Blue Moon, in 1931.

On May 4, 1891, Sherlock Holmes fought Professor James Moriarty on the brink of the Reichenbach Falls and presumably both fell to their deaths. It wasn't until April 5, 1894, however, that Dr. Watson learned his friend had survived. These three years have been popularly referred to as the "Great Hiatus". And where did Holmes spend them?

"'I traveled for two years in Tibet, therefore,' says Holmes in The Empty House in April 1894, 'and amused myself by visiting Lhassa and spending some days with the head Lama. You may have read of the remarkable explorations of a Norwegian named Sigerson, but I am sure that it never occurred to you that you were receiving news of your friend.'"

Why Tibet? And where did Holmes spend the rest of those many months. Edgar Smith in "Sherlock Holmes and the Great Hiatus" (BSJ July 1946) established to his satisfaction that Holmes never did journey to Tibet. While A. Carson Simpson in SHERLOCK HOLMES' WANDERJAHRE 1953-1956 stated that not only did Holmes visit the head Lama but proposed he was commissioned by him to solve the mystery of the Abominable Snowman. An investigation taking him to the very sloves of Mt. Everest.

This author concurs with Simpson up to a point. Holmes visited the Lama, but he didn't leave to hunt Snowmen. Strange tales of queer events on the Tibetan frontier had been weaving their way to Baker Street for years. Large consignments of books, art works, plumbing fixtures, etc. sent secretly across the border by an ingenious and devious system were always suddenly swallowed up and never heard of again. Who or what in the wilds of Tibet was reading complicated works of science and classical literature and paying in raw gold? It was this that attracted Holmes to Tibet; Holmes didn't take aimless holidays.

"'From time to time,' remarks Chang, 'we require certain things from distant entrepots and it is our habit to obtain them in due course, by what methods and with what formailities I need not trouble you.'"[2]

It is my conjecture that Holmes, under an unknown alias, and his companion, a Norwegian explorer named Sigerson, began their search were nearly forty years later English globetrotter M. V. O. Rutherford began his unsuccessful search for the missing Hugh Conway, H. M. Consul. "'Then I tried at Tatsien-Fu. It's a weird place, a sort of world's-end market town, deuced difficult to get at, where the Chinese coolies from Yunnan transfer their loads of tea to the Tibetans.'"[3]

But Holmes and Sigerson were more skillful. They managed to catch hold of a slender thread leading them on a long and hardous trek to "...the loftiest and least hospitable part of

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the earth's surface, the Tibetan plateau, two miles high even in its lowest valleys, a vast, uninhabited, and largely unexplored region of wind-swept upland."[4]

That Holmes had the necessary skill in rock-craft and climbing we know from The Empty House and The Sign of the Four of September 1888.

Somewhere on that vast plateau Holmes and Sigerson paused in their investigation to admire one of the loveliest mountains on earth; a perfect cone of snow and rock, the legendary Karakal. But their wonder was cut short by the arrival of a tiny caravan of Tibetans seemingly out of nowhere.

"'...the lamasery was no longer hospitably indifferent;' remarks Father Perrault to Conway. 'it had already both a need and a desire for new arrivals. And indeed in ther years to follow it happened that more than one party of explorers, glorying in their first distant glimpse of Karakal, encountered messengers bearing a cordial invitation--and one that was rarely declined.'"[5]

By now most have guessed where this study is leading. What superb and exquisite lamasery could serve as a refuge for Holmes? Where could he go to pursue his interests and relax in an atmosphere of the most refined culture and civilization? "'I have been using myself up rather too freely,'" he states in The Final Problem in May 1891. Only one place, the legendary Shangri-La! And it was there Holmes and Sigerson were conducted.

That the monks of Holmes is likely. "'We have the files of The Times, Mr. Barnard,' remarks Chang, 'up to a few years ago. But only, I regret to say, the London Times.'"[6]

What attractions did Shangri-La have to tempt Holmes? Just the finest in art, books, music, and learning.

Conway "...recognized treasures that museums and millionaries alike would have bargained for, exquisite pearl blue Sung ceramics, paintings in tinted inks preserved for more than a thousand years, lacquers in which the cold and lovely detail of fairyland was not so much depicted as orchestrated. A world of incomparable refinements...'"[7]

"'Watson won't allow that I know anything of art,' says Holmes in THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES in October 1888, 'but that is mere jealousy, because out views upon the subject differ.'"

Shangri-La also had "...a very delightful library, lofty and spacious and containing a multitude of books so retiringly housed...that the whole atmosphere was more of wisdom than of learning, of good manners than seriousness. Conway...found much to astonish him; the world's best literature was there...as well as a great deal of abstruse and curious stuff that could not appraise."[8] During a later visit Conway estimated the number of volumes at 20,000 to 30,000, with such authors as Plato, Omar, Nietzsche, and the Moores.

Holmes admits in The Lion's Mane in August 1909 he's an omnivorous reader and he has an attic in his little house stuffed with books. Let me diverge here briefly and remark that the strange volume THE ORIGIN OF TREE WORSHIP appearing in The Empty House and which is impossible to locate up to now may have been privately printed on Shangri-La presses.

"...the lamas," explains Chang to Conway, "held Western music in high

esteem, particularly that of Mozart; they had a collection of all the great European compositions, and some were skilled performers on various instruments."[9] One of the lamas had even been a student of Chopin.

We know that Holmes was an enthusiastic musician; not only a very capable performer but a composer of unusual merit. "'And now for lunch,' says Holmes in A STUDY IN SCARLET in March 1881, 'and then for Norman Neruda. Her attack and her bowing are splendid. What's that little thing of Chopin's she plays so magnificently: Tra-la-la-lira-lira-lay.'"

"'And, most precious of all,' says Perrault to Conway, 'you will have Time--that rare and lovely gift that your Western countries have lost the more they have pursued it. You will have time to read--never again will you skim pages to save minutes, or avoid some study lest it prove too engrossing.'"[10] Yoga and the lamas' rigorous self-discipline, combined with narcotic indulgence, is capable of prolonging life to great lengths.

Holmes would have no restrictions on his studies. "'Of late,' he tells Watson in The Final Problem, 'I have been tempted to look into the problems furnished by Nature rather than those more superficial ones for which our artificial state of society is responsible.'" In his later retirement Holmes divided his attention between philosophy and bee keeping.

Conway "...came gradually to realize the extent and variety of their employments; besides their knowledge of languages, some, it appeared, took to the full sea of learning in a manner that would have yielded bit surprises to the Western world. Many were engaged in writing manuscript books of various kinds; one (Chang said) had made valuable researches into pure mathematics; another was co-ordinating Gibbon and Spengler into a vast thesis on the history of European civilization."[11] The mathematical lama seems slightly ominous. Did Professor Moriarty find his way to Shangri-La also?

One field of research Holmds would have found lacking would have been criminology. "Chang replied that crime was very rare, partly because every one enjoyed a sufficiency of everything he could reasonably desire."[12] A deficiency Holmes could gladly do without. As Holmes said before his epic battle with Moriarty: "'I tell you, Watson, in all seriousness, that if I could beat that man, if I could free society of him, I should feel that my own career had reached its summit, and I should be prepared to turn to some more placid line in life.'"

The religious beliefs of the sanctuary wouldn't have conflicted with those of Holmes either. "'The jewel has facets,' says Chang, 'and it is possible that many religions are moderately true.'"[13] As Holmes remarks in The Stockbroker's Clerk in June 1889: "'There is nothing in which deduction is so necessary as in religion. It can be built up as an exact science by the reasoner.'"

So Holmes and Sigerson were persuaded to stay. "'My life,' says Holmes to Watson in The Red-Headed League in October 1887, 'is spent in one long effort to escape from the common-place of existence.'" And here was the ideal place to do it, in a "...strange culture-pocket, hidden amongst unknown ranges, and ruled over by some vague kind of theocracy..."[14] A place whose serene atmosphere influenced Holmes ever afterwards.

After nearly two pleasant years Holmes was honored by an interview with Perrault, the high directing intelligence of Shangri-La, who explained its purpose to Conway years later probably using much the same

words.

"'There is a reason, and a very definite one indeed. It is the whole reason for this colony of chance-sought strangers living beyond their years. We have a dream and a vision. He foresaw a time when man, exultent in the technique of homicide, would rage so hotly over the world that every precious thing would be in danger, every book and picture and harmony, every treasure garnered through two milleniums...all would be lost...or wrecked...we may pray to oulive the doom that gathers around on every side. Here we shall stay with our books and our music and our meditations, conserving the frail elegancies of a dying age, and seeking such wisdom as men will need when their passions are spent. We have a heritage to cherish and bequeath...when the strong have devoured each other, the Christian ethic may at last be fulfilled, and the meek shall inherit the earth.'"[15]

Perhaps this may have been the answer Holmes was looking for when he asked Watson in The Cardboard Box in August 1889: "'What object is served by this circle of misery and violence and fear? It must tend to some end, or else our universe is ruled by chance, which is unthinkable. But what end? There is the great standing perennial problem to which human reason is as far from an answer as ever.'"

But Holmes was instructed to leave Shangri-La by Perrault. He must have known of Holmes' importance in both world and private affairs. "'Of course,' Holmes tells Watson in The Final Problem concerning Colonel Moran, 'when I left the country there was no one to cope with him.'" Perrault realized Holmes still had a part to play.

"'The storm," Perrault remarks to Conway, 'will be such a one, my son, as the world has not seen before. There will be no safety by arms, no help from authority, no answer in science. It will rage till every flower of culture is trampled, and all human things are leveled in a vast chaos. But the Dark Ages that are to come will cover the whole world in a single pall; there will be neither escape nor sanctuary, save such as are too secret to be found or too humble to be noticed. And Shangri-La may hope to be both of these. ...I see, at a great distance, a new world stirring in the ruins, stirring clumsily but in hopefulness, seeking its lost and legendary treasures. And they will all be here, my son, hidden behind the mountains in the valley of the Blue Moon, preserved as by miracle for a new Renaissance...'"[16]

Alas, poor Sigerson wasn't allowed to leave, it was against the rules. "'...you intend to keep us?' asks Conway of Chang. 'That, I take it, is the important and invariable proviso?'"[17]

But there are exceptions. "'What about the various exploring parties that have arrived here? Was the pass always equally open to them when they wanted to get away?' 'Special circumstances, my dear sir, have sometimes required special considerations.'"[18] The authorities were fully empowered to do anything they considered wise, up to and including permission to visit the outside world.

So Holmes rejoined the world and though he had announced his intended retirement in 1891 if he triumphed over Moriarty, he continued in practice for almost a decade after the complete destruction of Moriarty's gang, eventually retiring to Sussex in 1903 where he gave himself up entirely to the soothing life of Nature for which he had so often yearned during the long years spent amid the smog of London.

In his final case His Last Bow in August 1914 Holmes had a conversation with Watson that seems to echo Perrault's words to Conway almost twenty years later about a gathering storm.

"'There's an east wind coming, Watson.'

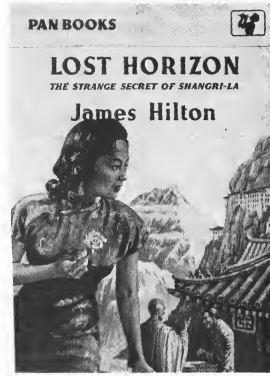
'I think not, Holmes. It is very warm.'

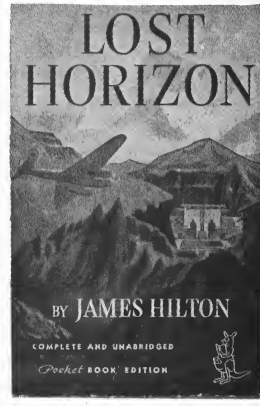
'Good old Watson! You are the one fixed point in a changing age. There's an east wind coming all the same, such a wind as never blew on England yet. It will be cold and bitter, Watson, and a good many of us may wither before its blast. But it's God's own wind none the less, and a cleaner, better, stronger land will lie in the sunshine when the storm has cleared.'"

And why no more cases after 1914? Is it going too far to believe that Holmes broke another rule? That he still lives, not merely in retirement, but in hiding, inaccessible and almost undiscoverable among the treasures of Shangri-La at this very moment with death still centuries in the future? I think so.

FOOTNOTES

1. James Hilton, LOST HORIZON (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1969), p. 68 (originally published 1933)
2. ibid, p. 79.
3. ibid, p. 208
4. ibid, p. 47
5. ibid, p. 132
6. ibid, p. 97
7. ibid, p. 86
8. ibid, p. 87
9. ibid, p. 89
10. ibid, p. 141
11. ibid, p. 173
12. ibid, p. 104
13. ibid, p. 99
14. ibid, p. 93
15. ibid, p. 145
16. ibid, p. 181
17. ibid, p. 137
18. ibid, p. 169





A Report on
THE FIRST EAST COAST PULP AND PAPERBACK CONVENTION
by Albert Tonik

The first East Coast Pulp and Paperback Convention is now part of history. Providence, Rhode Island was the site of the convention which was held the weekend of May 17th and 18th. More precisely, it convened at the Howard Johnson Lodge in Pawtucket. However, as you proceed there from Providence, the area appears to be part of one large city. The convention was organized and run with quiet efficiency by Harold "Hal" Kinney, a large and blocky man, who seems to be rather shy in his dealings with people.

The attendance was not overwhelming. There were about twenty five dealer tables and about 75 guests. Those of you who were considering attending but did not, should chastise yourselves. This is especially true of the people that live in the corridor between New York and Boston. Poor attendance is an affliction of first conventions, and, hopefully, that illness disappears with age. I overheard an interesting story told by one of the young ladies at the registration desk outside the dealers' room. On Saturday, a man approached the desk and asked what was going on in the room. She replied it was a pulp convention. He gasped, "You mean that for $5, I can see the Pope!"

There was lively buying and selling around the tables. The greatest activity seemed to be in the adventure and detective magazines. The hero pulps appeared to have much less activity. There was the usual amount of interest in the science fiction and fantasy magazines. A lower level of trading seemed to surround the paperback, hardcover, and dime novel displays. The most unusual dealer table was chaired by young Shawn Gabbard and his friend, Daryl Herrick. Daryl has published the first issue of DOC SAVAGE FORUM. Shawn was selling a quality T-shirt with a picture of Doc Savage for only $6. The picture was extracted from that used in the Doc Savage Club Award that was advertised in the monthly magazine. The picture was surrounded by the words, DOC SAVAGE, LESTER DENT, OCT. 1904-FEB. 1959. The T-shirt comes in any size and color. If you wish to purchase one, write to Shawn Gabbard, 109 Essex St., Apt. 7, Syracuse, NY 13204.

Some of the good points in the operation of the convention were the following. Hal brought in a tape recorder. During Saturday, he played tape recordings of The Shadow Radio Show. When you had a quiet moment, you could stop and hear the sinister laugh of The Shadow as he closes in on the villains. Or you could hear the sonorous intoning of, "The weed of crime bears bitter fruit." Hal used the microphone attached to the tape player to make announcements to the crowd about coming events. In addition, he had a large chalk board near the front of the room, on which board were listed the events of the day. As the time schedule changed, so did the contents of the board. There was a piano in one corner of the trading room. On Sunday morning, Dr. Faye Ringel, one of the young ladies who help run Merlin's Closet (one of the local bookstores), entertained us with an impromptu and virtuoso performance on the piano. A few, little things could have improved the convention. Pinned name tags would have helped those who did not know everyone by sight. There was nowhere that you could get a drink of water except at the Howard Johnson restaurant.

The guest of honor was Walter Gibson. When I think of a concise way to try to describe this 82 year old man, the lines from "The Night Before Christmas" spring to mind,

"With a little, old driver
So lively and quick"

Shawn Gabbard wanted to give one of his T-shirts to Walter Gibson. When he asked for the size, the reply was--extra large. Mr. Gibson had an autographing session. Watching the technique for signing his name was fascinating. He draws two large X's that touch at the top and the bottom. Across the top he writes "alter B." followed by a large "G". He continues on the bottom with "rant". Then he goes back and fills in "axwell" and "ibson".

Ron Goulart was master of ceremonies. When trying to describe him I think of the inverse of the torture rack. Instead of being stretched, he gives the appearance of being compressed. He has thick black hair and a moustache. When he reads, he shoves his glasses up into his hair. He was buying detective magazines containing authors he was interested in reading.

At 2:15 on Saturday afternoon, Ron Goulart introduced Will Murray and his slide show on The Shadow magazine covers. Walter Gibson was in the audience and offered comments during the presentation. What can I say about Will Murray that has not been said before. His slim, bearded figure seems to be everywhere at once during the convention. His slides were pictures of the covers of The Shadow magazine. Most of them were reproduced in THE DUENDE HISTORY OF THE SHADOW, only this time they were in color.

A sampling of the comments are presented here. The cover for THE BLACK MASTER was the first with the now traditional Shadow wearing his slouch hat and cloak with the red lining. For those magazines that the news dealers did not sell, they were supposed to tear the front cover off and send it back to the distributor for credit. The magazine was to go to the choppers. However, the dealers devised a scheme to rescue the magazines from the choppers and sell them through back-date magazine stores. To put a crimp in this plan, the issue with HANDS IN THE DARK began the story on the cover. The Shadow's name in Chinatown was Ying Ko. Walter Gibson obtained this name by asking a waiter in a Chinese restaurant how to say The Shadow in Chinese. When The Shadow was wounded, he would try to get to Dr. Rupert Sayre's office on Park Avenue to be patched up. Gibson knew a Dr. David W. Stowe (Note: Will Murray's notes of the convention give the name as David W. Stowell. It is not known which is correct.) at 565 Park Avenue who was the model for Dr. Sayre. The cover for the story, THE LONE TIGER, depicts The Shadow and seven of his agents. That picture appeared as the back cover of the first issue of The Shadow comic. The tradition of pulp magazine publishers was to have a Christmas scene on the cover of every magazine at Christmas time. The management of Street & Smith were shocked when The Shadow cover for Christmas, 1932, THE CREEPING DEATH, presented a skeleton peering out of a curtain. Their feelings were ameliorated when the issue sold out. The cover for CRIME AT SEVEN OAKS was to have a picture of the Great Dane, Vulcan. To find a dog that large, Graves Gladney had to got to a local gas station where they had a watchdog. That experience was so harrowing that Gladney refused to do another dog cover. During World War II some airmen asked for the cover of THE THIRD SKULL so that they could paint it on their plane. When the canvas showed up after the war, it had been removed from its frame and folded.

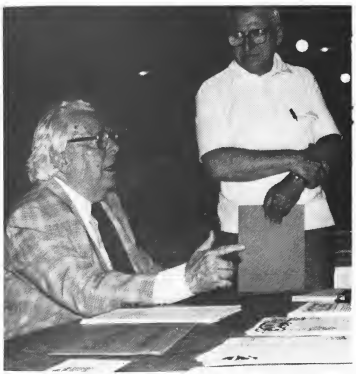
At 4:30 on Saturday afternoon, Don Grant gave a talk. Don is a quiet, softspoken man. Physically he could pose for William Harper Littlejohn (Johnny to Doc Savage fans). Don stated that as a teenager he became interested in science fiction via PLANET STORIES. Then he became engrossed with the fantasy magazines. Now he spends all of his time as a one man publisher. Over the years his interest in pulp magazines has risen and fallen. He has had seven complete collections of WEIRD TALES at different times. He is trying to collect a complete set of the magazine, ADVENTURE. He believes that this neglected magazine has some of the better writers. This is especially true during the reign of the editor, Arthur Sullivan Hoffman, from November 1910 to 1927. One of Mr. Grant's requests is that some enterprising bibliophile do an index on ADVENTURE. A few of the good authors were; Harold Lamb, H. Bedford Jones, and Talbot Mundy.

Talbot Mundy wrote from 1911 until his death in 1940. His stories have appeared in 175 issues of ADVENTURE. His best stories were those using the characters, JimGrim and Tros of Samothrace. In addition, Mundy scripted the daily 15 minute radio program, JACK ARMSTRONG THE ALL AMERICAN BOY. He did this for the last five years of his life. He changed the direction of the show from a sports orientation to one of high adventure all over the globe. It became one of the highest rated adventure shows on the air.

The highlight of Saturday evening was to be a panel discussion with Ron Goulart, Walter Gibson, Will Murray, and Chris Steinbrunner. Chris Steinbrunner is a rotund individual with a lot of nervous energy. He has written an introduction to THE SHADOW SCRAPBOOK. He is one of the editors of THE BAKER STREET JOURNAL. The panel was delayed until Sunday afternoon. At that time it was canceled due to a lack of audience.

After the trading room closed at 8 PM on Saturday night, the movies began. There was THE MALTESE FALCON with Humphrey Bogart, THE MASK OF FU MANCHU with Boris Karloff, CHARLIE CHAN AT THE OPERA with Warner Oland. The Sunday afternoon feature was THE SHADOW STRIKES with Rod LaRocque.

Practically everyone at the convention felt that it was worthwhile attending. If you think that there should be a second East Coast Pulp and Paperback Convention, write to Harold Kinney, RFD 1, box 218A, Andover, CT 06232 and let him know. At the moment, Hal is very discouraged. He lost almost $200 sponsoring the convention. He would like to know about trimming expenses, such as no movies. He would like to hear from people who did not attend and their reasons for not attending.



Walter Gibson Albert Tonik

CONFESSIONS OF A THUG

or

Stalking the Silent Stranglers of Sindhia

by

Colonel Philip Meadows Taylor

an appreciation
by
Andy Biegel, Jr.

The word THUG means a deceiver, from the Hindee verb THUGNA, to deceive;---It is pronounced TUG, slightly aspirated.

Fiction, in the Pulp magazines, had a number of Oriental/Far Eastern villains. One calls to mind Sax Rohmer's "Insidious Dr Fu Manchu," Robert Hogan's "Mysterious Wu Fang," Donald Keyhoe with his "Dr Yen Sin," leader of the "Invisible Peril," An integral ingredient of Rohmer's fiction was the use of the Dacoit as the favorite servant of Fu Manchu.

In 1939 RKO released one of the most adventurous movies of all time; Kipling's "GUNGA DIN." The film starred Cary Grant, Victor McLaglen, and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. Sam Jaffe was "Gunga Din" and Eduardo Ciannelli, surpassing all his previous performances portrayed "Gura," leader of the Thugs. We are introduced to Thuggee when Gunga Din and "Cutter" (Grant), while searching for the "Temple of Gold," stumble on a meeting of Thugs. "Gura" (Ciannelli) is exhorting his followers to reclaim the glory of Kalee, the eight armed Goddess of the murder cult. Gura makes his pitch to his men:

"Look up!---Lift up your faces to the light
that shines on Kalee's throne."
"KALEE"----(chant of Thugs.)
"Every man's hand is against us."

"Oh! My Brothers, today is at hand; I have read the Omens; it is true. Tonight a Jackal screamed upon the night."
"KALEEE"----(Thug chant.)
"What does this mean, my Brothers? It means that the Mother Kalee, with all her arms outstretched hugs us to her bosom. Let the neophytes and their teachers draw near. Where are the Stranglers?"
"HERE" (chorus.)
"Give them their strangling cloths."
"KALEEEE"
"Give them their burial picks."
"KALEEEEE"
"RISE AND KILL!...KILL AS YOU BE KILLED YOURSELF! KILL FOR THE LOVE OF KALEE!...KILL!.. KILL!....KILL!...."

A brilliant, chilling, magnificent moment of Movie Magic!

Origin of the Thugs

However, in all of fiction nothing can surpass the true story of the Thugs of India.

The THUGS were an hereditary guild of murderers who, acting under the supposed patronage and direction of the Goddess KALEE, strangled and robbed their victims in every part of India. As a religious sect, murder was not only a means to gain, but a duty and an act of worship. Each member carried a sacred pickaxe, the original of which was one of Kalee's teeth. A 'horrid death' awaited the Thug who, having sworn upon the pickaxe, broke his oath: 'his head will turn round, his face towards his back, and he will writhe in tortures till he died.' Kalee had also given her votaries a rib to be used as a knife, and the hem of her robe for a strangling cloth.

The origin of Thuggee is unknown. The system existed on a large scale in the fourteenth century, when a thousand Thugs were captured at Delhi. Colonel Sleeman, Commissioner for the Suppression of Thuggee, tells in his book, "Rambles and Recollections," of a Thug 'saint' who lived at Delhi at the beginning of the fourteenth century and possessed an inexhaustible purse. The Thugs regarded him as their founder, and made pilgrimages to his tomb. He came originally from Persia, where he may have been a disciple of 'the old man of the mountains,' the founder of the Assassins who frequented the shores of the Caspian about 1100.

"CONFESSIONS OF A THUG" was written by Colonel Philip Meadows Taylor in 1837. He was then 29 years old, and held the rank of Captain in the army of the Nizam of Hyderabad. At the age of 15 he had gone from a Liverpool office to join a 'great mercantile firm' in Bombay, and left when 'the great firm' verged on bankruptcy. Thru a relative he obtained a commission in the Nizam's service and within two years he was Assistant Superintendent of Police in a district of from ten to twelve thousand square miles. Here he saw the handiwork of Thugs; 'dead bodies, evidently strangled, were found by the roadside, and no clue could be discovered as to the perpetrators of their death.'

Author's Introduction

Colonel Taylor writes in his introduction to "Confessions of A Thug": "The tale of crime which forms the subject of the following pages is, alas! almost all true; what there is of fiction has been supplied only to connect the events, and make the adventures of AMEER ALI as interesting as the nature of his horrible profession would permit me."

"I became acquainted with this person in 1832. He was one of the informers who were sent to the Nizam's territories from Saugor, and whose appalling disclosures caused an excitement in the country which can never be forgotten. I have listened to them with fearful interest, such as I can scarcely hope to excite in the minds of my readers; and I can only add, in corroboration of the ensuing story, that, by his own confessions, which were in every particular confirmed by those of his brother informers, and are upon official record, he had been directly concerned in the murder of seven hundred and nineteen persons. He once said to me, 'Ah! Sir, if I had not been in prison twelve years, the number would have been a thousand!'

"How the system of Thuggee could have become so prevalent, unknown to, and unsuspected by, the people of India, must to the majority of the English public not conversant with the peculiar construction of the Oriental society, be a subject of extreme wonder!"

Introduction to AMEER ALI

While in prison, Ameer Ali meets with Colonel Taylor and agrees to tell the true story of the Thugs.

> "You ask me, Sahib, for an account of my life; my relation of it will be understood by you, as you are acquainted with the peculiar habits of my countrymen. I cannot help looking back with pride and exultation on the

many daring feats I have performed. Often does my spirit rise at the recollection of them, and often do I again wish myself the leader of a band of gallant spirits, such as once obeyed me, to roam with them whenever my inclination or hope of booty prompted.

"But the time is past. Life, Sahib, is dear to everyone; to preserve mine, which was forfeited to your laws, I have bound myself to your service by the fearful tenure of denouncing all my old confederates, and you well know how that service is performed by me. Of all the members of my band few remain at large; many have been sacrificed at the shrine of justice, and those who now wander broken, and pursued from haunt to haunt, you have such intelligence as will lead to their speedy apprehension.

"Yet Thuggee, capable of exciting the mind so strongly, will not, cannot be annihilated! On the contrary, it increases; and from every Thug who accepts the alternative of perpetual imprisonment to dying on the gallows, you learn of others whom even I knew not of."

Ameer Ali goes on to relate his early childhood, how his father, being well born, and a thriving merchant, one day decides to sell his house and land and move to Indore, a more progressive town, in the province of Malwa. On the 4th day of their journey the family is offered protection by a group claiming to be soldiers, who were also travelling to Indore. They warn Ameer Ali's father of the dangers of Thugs, stating that there were many on the road between where they were and Indore and they cautioned him against them. Since Ali's father was carrying more than a thousand rupees he thought it wise to accept the offer. Two nights later the family is attacked by the so-called soldiers, who were really a band of Thugs, and, with exception of Ameer, all are strangled. Ameer, whom the leader, Ismail, had taken a fancy to, brought the boy to his village where he is raised by Ismail and his wife Miriam. Ameer's tale continues:

"I pass over the next 4 or 5 years of my

life, as I can remember no incident in them worth relating. My foster father, Ismail, soon after the death of his wife, removed from the village where he had hitherto resided, and took his abode in the town of Murnae, which was in Sindia's possession and I was put to school with an old man who taught me to read and write Persian."

As he grew older Ameer Ali often observed his father very frequently had met with a number of men in his home by night. One evening, being naturally curious, he feigned sleep, and after the arrival of the usual number of men, he arose and hid behind a screen not far from the room.

"After all had eaten they drew together, and began conversing in a language I only partially understood. By and by Ismail went to a closet and took from it a box, which he placed in the circle and opened it. Rich as I had always thought him I had no idea of the wealth it contained; there were quantities of gold and silver ornaments of all kinds, with strings of pearls and other valuables. Each member was given a considerable share for himself."

It was at this time that the knowledge that his foster father was the leader of a gang of Thugs, was realized by Ameer Ali and he crept back into his bed his head filled with the wonderous things he had seen and heard, especially as to the conversation wherein Ismail discusses his son's future with the gang.

"You may believe, Sahib, that my curiosity was at the highest pitch: who was Ismail? who were the rest? what was it I was to know, or be taught? my mind was in a whirl. I could not sleep that night; I never closed my eyes; I seemed to be in a fever, so intense was my curiosity, and, I may say my desire to know everything, and to become a partner with Ismail in whatever he was."

A few months later, Ameer, now about 18 years of age is summoned to

his father's sleeping room, a room to which he had rarely been admitted. After staring at the boy for a long time, a time in which Ameer could see that his father was disturbed, each gazing at the other. Finally:

> 'Why, Ameer, my child, my son, what is this that has been troubling you? tell me my boy.'
>
> "My father," I replied, "I have erred; my curiosity, a boy's curiosity, overcame me, but since then my feelings have changed, why I know not, and I implore you to put me to the proof as I feel that I can do anything that you wish."
>
> 'My son,' my father at last broke the silence, 'you know more than I had ever intended you should. I have no alternative but to make you such as myself. Thus, my son, I need hardly now mention that I am a Thug, a member of that glorious profession. It has long been my wish to see you at the head of a band of your own and to spend the remaining days allotted to me, content with hearing praises which will be bestowed upon Ameer Ali, the daring and enterprising son of Ismail! till then I shall be your guardian and instructor.'

From that day Ameer put himself under the tuition of the Gooroo, or teacher of the band---an old Thug considered to be one of the most dexterous Bhuttotes, or stranglers, who had lived within the memory of any of the men of the company. He was a Hindoo, a Rajpoot, named Roop Singh. A man of immense strength and power. It was his duty to initiate Ameer thoroughly in the practice of a Bhuttote.

Ameer was allowed no meat and drank only milk for four days. He began knowing the ways of Thuggee. Numerous sacrifices were made to the sacred pickaxe, every omen observed. On the fifth day Ameer is handed the strangling cloth and having bathed and anointed himself with sweet smelling oils and marked on his forehead with vermilion, as a votary of Bnowanee, he was declared a Bhuttoee.

> 'One thing I forgot' the Gooroo said laughing, as he handed me the cloth, 'and '

that was the principal, perhaps. I have not shown you how to use it, and I have a peculiar knack of my own which is easily communicated. You will learn it soon.'

The Gooroo took the strangling cloth, tied a large knot at one end, with a piece of silver inserted in it, this he held in his left hand, the plain end being in his right, and about as much space between them as would nearly compass a man's neck, the closed hands had the palms uppermost.

'Now!' said he, 'mark this; and when you throw the cloth from behind, and have got it tight, suddenly turn your knuckles into the neck, giving a sharp wrench to either side that may be most convenient. If done in a masterly manner, instant death ensues.'

Ameer tries to emulate the old Gooroo's method but is clumsy and the old man is not satisfied. The Gooroo demonstrates on Ameer, who further relates:

"My blood ran cold through me as I felt his chill, clammy hands about my neck. But he did not hurt me, and I saw where my error had been. I tried it on him as he had shown me several times and was declared at last to be perfect."

Travelling with the band of Thugs, Ameer learns by observing the others, the methods of the murder cult. The deaths of a few solitary travelers by the hands of a small portion of the group enlightens the boy and he is eager to have his first 'kill.' One day Ismail, as the leader of the band is asked to protect a Sahoukar (banker or wholesale trader) on his next journey for which he will pay a large remuneration. At a secret conference between the Sahoukar and Ismail, the former tells the latter that he was going to take down a good deal of treasure, some valuable jewels and some merchandise, by which he hoped to get a handsome profit at Hyderabad. When Ismail relates this news to the band it is excited, as pickings heretofore had been rather slim. In order to give the band of Thugs as much of an appearance of soldiers as possible, Ismail purchases matchlocks, swords and shields for the followers of his group.

From Oomraotee to Mungloor is three days traveling and on arrival there the leader declares:

'I shall decide on the place for the ending of the matter. There are some low hills and ravines not far beyond it, which will give us excellent opportunities for concealing the bodies.'

Ameer felt that his time had come, and that in a few hours he might take his place with the rest, having established his right to be their equal. He has been chosen by his father to be the one to murder the Sahoukar, the most important one in the party.

"Perhaps it was weakness, Sahib, but from that time I avoided the sight of the Sahoukar as much as possible. I saw him once or twice on the road; but an involuntary shudder crept through me, and like a fool I almost wished I was back again in my village. But it was too late to retract; I had a character to gain and most of all the respect of my father."

It was now generally known that Ameer was to have the Sahoukar to himself and many were the words of advice the followers of Ismail offered the neophyte. As the time approached Ameer's soul burned for the work ahead like that of a young and brave soldier entering into battle for the first time. The Gooroo presented Ameer with the 'strangling cloth,' saying: 'Receive this now sacred weapon; put your trust in it; in the holy name of Kalee, I bid it do your will!' The grave for the nine members in the rich party, including the Sahoukar himself, is prepared and each of the assassins placed close to the one to whom he had been assigned.

"The whole scene, Sahib, is now before me. The bullocks and their drivers, with the Thugs, were all in a confused group in the bed of the little stream, the men shouting and urging on their beasts: but it was easy to see that every man in the Sahoukar's party had a Thug close to him awaiting the signal.

"Above stood my father, his partner, and myself---the Sahoukar, one of his servants, and several Thugs. I was eagerly awaiting

the signal; I tightly grasped the fatal cloth, and my first victim was within a foot of me! I went behind him as being preferable to one side, and observed one of the other Thugs do the same to a servant. The Sahoukar moved a step or two towards the road---I instinctively followed him: 'JEY KALEE' shouted my father: it was the signal, and I obeyed it.

"As quick as thought the cloth was round the Sahoukar's neck---I seemed endued with superhuman strength---I wrenched his neck round---he struggled convulsively for an instant, and fell. I did not quit my hold, I knelt down on him, and strained the cloth till my hands ached: but he moved not---he was dead! I was mad with excitement!---My blood boiled, and I felt as though I could have strangled a hundred others, so easy, so simple had the reality been. One turn of my wrists had placed me on an equality with those who had followed the profession for years."

The large grave for the Sahoukar and the rest of his party was ready, Ameer watched silently as each of the bodies was dragged to the brink of the excavation and thrown in with the leader's being last. Incisions were made in each corpse's abdomen, and sharpened stakes driven thru them.

Ameer's father explains this action: 'Were it not for the precaution you see, the ground might swell and the jackals would drag out the bodies; in this way however it is impossible.' When all was finished, quantities of stones were thrown upon the bodies, afterward thorns, and the whole covered with sand, which was carefully smoothed.

During the ensuing 20 years, Ameer finally being designated the leader of the band, they travelled up and down the length of India, scoring successfully in such towns as Jubbulpore, Hyderabad, Nagpur, Sholapur and many smaller towns. His band created much havoc with the population of India. Most of his achievements were due largly to his method of disguising his men as soldiers, as his father had done before him, thereby gaining the confidence of a party of travellers until such time as the horrible deed could be consumated, and they could be strangled with ease.

A few years after gaining the leadership of his father's band, Ameer meets and marries a young girl named Azima and has one child, a daughter, by her. He is twice captured and sentenced to prison but released finally, to continue his pillage of the people of India. Once while free he murders his sister. Eventually, at the age of 35 he is captured for the last time and confesses to the many murders perpetrated by he and his band; over 2,000 corpses buried thruout the land. In a bid to escape the gallows, Ameer agrees to accompany the British authorities and betray all of his followers; numbering in the hundreds. Most are hanged, the rest imprisoned for life.

Ameer now concludes his horrifying tale as told to the author:

> "And now, Sahib, my life will become one of dull routine and inactivity. The usefullness of my life, in the betrayal of my bands, has become as nothing. Why should I live? is a question I often ask myself; why should an existence be continued to me in which I have no enjoyment, no pleasure, no care, not even grief? I have no remorse but for one act, the murder of my sister, and that will never leave me.
>
> "Yet I live until Allah pleases to send the angel to loose the cord which binds my life to the clay it inhabits.
>
> "I fear that I have often wearied you by the minute relation of my history; but I have told all, nor concealed from you one thought, one feeling, much less any act which at this distance of time I can remember. You have been given a faithful portrait of a Thug's life, his ceremonies and his acts, and I am proud that the world will know the deeds and adventures of Ameer Ali, the Thug."

Finish

"CONFESSIONS OF A THUG" was first published in 1839, and by the Oxford University Press for their "The World's Classics" in 1916.

REVIEW

Carr, John Dickson. THE DOOR TO DOOM; AND OTHER DETECTIONS. Edited and with an introduction by Douglas G. Greene. NY: Harper & Row; 1980. 352p. (A Joan Kahn Book)

He has been critically neglected but not under-rated. A formalist of formalists, he stuck to the jigsaw school of detective fiction long after its day was done. To John Dickson Carr, reality had no place in crime fiction. Crime fiction to him was the pure puzzle, the chess problem, the game of wits between the author and reader, no matter how formalized, how stilted, how artificial, how unreal. Unreality certainly was his forte. In no other writer do the characters behave so stupidly. Surely John Dickson Carr was the foremost male exponent of the "Had-I-But Known" school. As a writer he was long-winded to the point of verbosity, and his one trick of creating suspense was to merely frustrate the reader by bringing a character to the point of revelation and then introducing an interruption. By this method, Carr managed to extend many short stories into novels.

Neglected, but not under-rated. He will always be only a minor novelist, just as the type of novel to which he adhered has become only a minor aspect of the history and development of the genre. It is interesting to read his essay on the detective form, "The grandest game in the world", reprinted in this collection. Practically all of the authors he praised have sunk into obscurity, whereas the works of the ones he sloughed-off or attacked have become the classics not only of the genre but also in some cases of literature in general.

But there are some who like his phoney manner, his verbose style, his creaking wheezes and dodges as he tries to mystify, that is if one does not get too impatient with his slowness at getting to the point and too fed-up with his simpering heroines. For them, and for the student of the genre, I truly recommend THE DOOR TO DOOM. The afficionado of Carr will want to at least read it, if not acquire it for her or his collection, but its real value is for the serious student of the genre. Greene's introduction, albeit subjective, is perceptive and serves as a useful addendum to Roger Herzel's "John Dickson Carr" in MINOR AMERICAN NOVELISTS, edited by Charles Alva Hoyt (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press; 1970); the latter and the chapter on Carr in Le Roy Panek's WATTEAU'S SHEPHEARDS; THE DETECTIVE NOVEL IN BRITAIN 1914-1940 (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press; 1979) represent the only serious studies of Carr to date. The student will also appreciate the reprinting of Carr's "The grandest game in the world", and both the student and the collector will appreciate the twenty-five page "A bibliography of the works of John Dickson Carr" (incidentally, so will the book-dealer).

As for the "Stories of crime and detection", the "Radio plays", the "Stories of the supernatural", and the "Sherlockian parodies", the last were better left in oblivion and have been included only to rip-off Holmesians in this present heydey of Sherlockian parody and travesty, while the second does not deserve to have been rescued from obscurity. Of the other two sections, containing respectively five and three stories, the ones of detection have been unmercifully culled from Carr's college literary magazine (and demonstrate exactly the undergraduateness that one would expect) and the ones of the supernatural have been lifted from divers '30's magazines. A couple of the eight stories are embarrassing in their ineptitude, while the others are passable...if you like Carr.

Something for everyone: a real pot-pourri. It will satisfy the Carr fan, it will please the student of crime fiction, and it will serve both the latter and the book-collector (and dealer) both specifically of Carriana and of the genre in general. The only ones who won't be pleased with it will be the mystery fans who neither study the genre nor collect and don't like Carr. And they wouldn't be interested in it anyway.

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LETTER FROM DICK SCHUBERT

Your item on serendipity in Megavore 10 touched a responsive note since I ran across the same type of coincidence just about a week before reading Megavore. A new mystery bookstore has just opened in metro Denver with a fair stock of used books. I picked up a few and settled down to read them.

The first one I read was Pat Frank's AN AFFAIR OF STATE. The hero in this tale is Jeff Baker, a Foreign Service Officer of the US State Department.

The next book I picked up to read was THE BIG FRAME by the Gordons. The hero of that one is homicide lieutenant Jeff Baker.

What do you think the odds are on that?

****

LETTER FROM RICHARD D. GRANT

Thank you for the thorough professional job you did in organizing the material on Avram Davidson's writing in a readable, clear format.

I found a few errors and omissions that you might want to print in a future issue of MEGAVORE -- exceedingly few.

In FICTION PUBLISHED AS PART OF A LARGER WORK

"A Good Night's Sleep" and "Sleep Well of Nights" should refer to each other. "Sleep Well of Nights" was the title change when Terry Carr reprinted the story in YEAR'S FINEST FANTASY #2 (Berkley, 1979).

"Bloody Man" was not reprinted in YEAR'S FINEST FANTASY, edited by Terry Carr (Berkley, 1978), but "Manatee Gal Ain't You Coming Out Tonight" was.

"If You Can't Beat Them" appeared in Ellery Queen August 1975, not 1974.

In BOOKS

The correct order of CRIMES AND CHAOS is: A Rain of Burning Girls, The Furniture Fellow, Midwife to Murder, The Forgotten Soldier, The Death of the Henry Clay, Beer Like Water, The Man Who Killed the Brigade, Little Rene, The Last Excursion.

LETTER FROM SCOTT CAMPBELL

Once again, a nice issue (#10). I was surprised and distressed to see so little ad response. My advert in the previous issue is still getting responses. I've heard from well over 100 people in over 20 states, as well as Japan, France & West Germany. The ad paid for itself well over 100 times. Frankly, I'm impressed! I'll send another advert as soon as I can get one together.

So thanks--and keep up the good work.

COMING UP: Next issue will feature a bibliography of James H. Schmitz, the first major article on pulp hero The Skipper, and article on Doc Savage, and a number of other items, including an article on writing sf, and another on juvenile mysteries.